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INSTITUTES
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

INSTITUTES

OF THE

CHRISTIAN BELLEFON

BY

JOHN GAVIN

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INSTITUTES
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

BY
JOHN CALVIN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN, AND COLLATED WITH
THE AUTHOR'S LAST EDITION IN FRENCH,

BY JOHN ALLEN.

Non tamen omnino potuit mors invida totum
Tollere Calvinum terris; æterna manebunt
Ingenii monumenta tui: et livoris iniqui
Languida paulatim cum flamma resederit, omnes
Religio qua pura nitet se fundet in oras
Fama tui. BUCHANAN. POEMAT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

FIRST AMERICAN, FROM THE LAST LONDON EDITION.

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THE TITLES

CHRISTIAN RELIGION

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CHAPTER II. The second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

CHAPTER III. The third chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

CHAPTER IV. The fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

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BOOK III.

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ARGUMENT.

THE two former books relate to God the Creator and Redeemer. This treats of God the Sanctifier, or of the operations of the Holy Spirit towards our salvation, being an accurate exposition of the third part of the Apostles' Creed.

The principal topics of this are seven, relating chiefly to one object, the doctrine of faith.

First, Since our enjoyment of Christ and all his benefits depends on the secret and special operation of the Holy Spirit, it discusses this operation, which is the foundation of faith, newness of life, and all holy exercise—Chap. I.

Secondly, Faith being as it were the hand by which we embrace Christ the Redeemer, as offered to us by the Holy Spirit, it next adds a complete description of faith—Chap. II.

Thirdly, To improve our knowledge of this salutary faith, it proceeds to shew the effects which necessarily result from it; and contends that true penitence is always the consequence of true faith. But first it proposes the doctrine of repentance in general—Chap. III: and then treats of the Popish repentance and its constituent parts—Chap. IV.—of indulgences and purgatorial fire—Chap. V. But institutes a particular discussion of the two branches of true penitence, the mortification of the flesh, and the vivification of the spirit, or the life of a Christian, which is excellently described—Chap. VI. VII. VIII. IX. X.

Fourthly, In order to a clearer display of the advantages and consequences of this faith, it first treats of justification by faith—Chap. XI.—then explains the questions which arise from it—Chap. XII. XIII. XIV. XV. XVI. XVII. XVIII.—and, lastly, proceeds to a dissertation on Christian liberty, which is an appendage to justification—Chap. XIX.

Fifthly, Next follows prayer, the principal exercise of faith, and the medium or instrument by which we daily receive blessings from God—Chap. XX.

Sixthly, But since the communication of Christ offered in the Gospel, is not embraced by men in general, but only by those whom the Lord hath favoured with the efficacy and peculiar grace of his Spirit: it obviates any supposition of absurdity, by subjoining a necessary and appropriate dissertation on the doctrine of divine election—Chap. XXI. XXII. XXIII. XXIV.

Lastly, Since we are liable to various difficulties and troubles while exercised in the severe warfare which always attends the life of a Christian, it contends that this may be alleviated by meditating on the final resurrection: and therefore adds a discourse on that subject—Chap. XXV.

INSTITUTES

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

What is declared concerning Christ rendered profitable to us by the secret Operation of the Spirit.

WE are now to examine how we obtain the enjoyment of those blessings which the Father hath conferred on his only-begotten Son, not for his own private use, but to enrich the poor and needy. And first it must be remarked, that as long as there is a separation between Christ and us, all that he suffered and performed for the salvation of mankind is useless and unavailing to us. To communicate to us what he received from his Father, he must therefore become ours, and dwell within us. On this account he is called our “head,” (a) and “the first-born among many brethren:” (b) and we, on the other hand, are said to be “grafted into him,” (c) and to “put him on:” (d) for, as I have observed, whatever he possesses is nothing to us, till we are united to him. But though it be true that we obtain this by faith; yet, since we see that the communication of Christ, offered in the Gospel, is not promiscuously embraced by all, reason itself teaches us to proceed farther, and to inquire into the secret energy of the Spirit, by which we are introduced to the enjoyment of Christ and all his benefits. I have already treated of the eternal deity and essence of the Spirit; let us now confine ourselves to this particular point: Christ came thus by water and blood, that the Spirit may tes-

(a) Ephes. iv. 15. (b) Rom. viii. 29. (c) Rom. xi. 17. (d) Gal. iii. 27.

tify concerning him, in order that the salvation procured by him may not be lost to us. For, as "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit;" so also "there are three on earth, the spirit, the water, and the blood." (*e*) Nor is this an useless repetition of the testimony of the Spirit, which we perceive to be engraven like a seal on our hearts, so that it seals the ablution and sacrifice of Christ. For which reason Peter also says, that believers are "elect through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (*f*) This passage suggests to us, that our souls are purified by the secret ablution of the Spirit, that the effusion of that sacred blood may not be in vain. For the same reason also Paul, when speaking of purification and justification, says, we enjoy both "in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (*g*) The sum of all is this, that the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ efficaciously unites us to himself. And what we have advanced in the last book concerning his unction, tends to establish the same truth.

II. But as a farther confirmation of this point, which is highly worthy of being understood, we must remember that Christ was endued with the Holy Spirit in a peculiar manner: in order to separate us from the world, and introduce us into the hope of an eternal inheritance. Hence the Spirit is called "the Spirit of holiness:" (*h*) not only because he animates and supports us by that general power which is displayed in mankind, and in all other creatures, but because he is the seed and root of a heavenly life within us. The principal topic, therefore, dwelt on by the prophets in celebrating the kingdom of Christ, is, that there would then be a more exuberant effusion of the Spirit. The most remarkable passage is that of Joel: "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh in those days." (*i*) For, though the prophet seems to restrict the gifts of the Spirit to the exercise of the prophetic function, yet he signifies, in a figurative way, that God, by the illumination of his Spirit, will make those his disciples, who before were total strangers to the heavenly doctrine. Besides, as God the Father gives us

(*e*) 1 John v. 7, 8.

(*f*) 1 Pet. i. 2.

(*g*) 1 Cor. vi. 11.

(*h*) Rom. i. 4.

(*i*) Joel ii. 28.

his Holy Spirit for the sake of his Son, and has also deposited "all fulness" with his Son, that he might be the minister and dispenser of his goodness; the Holy Spirit is sometimes called the Spirit of the Father, and sometimes the Spirit of the Son. "Ye (says Paul) are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (*k*) And thence he derives a hope of complete renovation, for "he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (*l*) For there is no absurdity in ascribing to the Father the praise of his own gifts, of which he is the author; and also ascribing the same glory to Christ, with whom the gifts of the Spirit are deposited, to be given to his people. Therefore he invites all who thirst to come to him and drink. (*m*) And Paul teaches us, that "unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (*n*) And it must be remarked, that he is called the Spirit of Christ, not only because the eternal Word of God is united with the Father by the same Spirit; but also with respect to his character of Mediator: for, if he had not been endued with this power, his advent to us would have been altogether in vain. In which sense he is called "the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, a quickening Spirit;" (*o*) where Paul compares the peculiar life with which the Son of God inspires his people, that they may be one with him, to that animal life which is equally common to the reprobate. So, where he wishes to the faithful "the grace of Christ, and the love of God," he adds also "the communion of the Spirit," (*p*) without which there can be no enjoyment of the paternal favour of God, or the beneficence of Christ. As he says also in another place; "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (*q*)

III. And here it will be proper to notice the titles by which the Scripture distinguishes the Spirit, where it treats of the commencement, progress, and completion of our salvation. First, he is called the "Spirit of adoption;" (*r*) because he witnesses to us the gratuitous benevolence of God, with which

(*k*) Rom. viii. 9. (*l*) Rom. viii. 11. (*m*) John vii. 37. (*n*) Ephes. iv. 7.
 (*o*) 1 Cor. xv. 45. (*p*) 2 Cor. xiii. 14. (*q*) Rom. v. 5. (*r*) Rom. viii. 15.

God the Father hath embraced us in his beloved and only-begotten Son, that he might be a father to us; and animates us to pray with confidence, and even dictates expressions, so that we may boldly cry, "Abba, Father." For the same reason, he is said to be "the earnest" and "seal" of our inheritance; because, while we are pilgrims and strangers in the world, and as persons dead, he infuses into us such life from heaven, that we are certain of our salvation being secured by the divine faithfulness and care. (s) Whence he is also said to be "life," because of righteousness. (t) Since by his secret showers he makes us fertile in producing the fruits of righteousness, he is frequently called "water:" as in Isaiah, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." (u) Again, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." (w) To which corresponds the invitation of Christ, just quoted: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me." (x) He sometimes, however, receives this appellation from his purifying and cleansing energy; as in Ezekiel, where the Lord promises to sprinkle clean water on his people to cleanse them from their impurities. (y) Because he restores to life and vigour, and continually supports those whom he hath anointed with the oil of his grace, he thence obtains the name of "unction." (z) Because he daily consumes the vices of our concupiscence, and inflames our hearts with the love of God and the pursuit of piety; from these efforts he is justly called "fire." (a) Lastly, he is described to us as a "fountain," whence we receive all the emanation of heavenly riches; and as "the hand of God," by which he exerts his power: because, by the breath of his power he inspires us with Divine life, so that we are not now actuated from ourselves, but directed by his agency and influence: so, that if there be any good in us, it is the fruit of his grace, whereas our characters without him are darkness of mind, and perverseness of heart. It has indeed already been clearly stated, that till our minds are fixed on the Spirit, Christ remains of no value to us; because we look at him as an object of cold speculation without us, and there-

(s) 2 Cor. i. 22. Eph. i. 13, 14.

(t) Rom. viii. 10.

(u) Isaiah lv. 1.

(w) Isaiah xlv. 3.

(x) John vii. 37. iv. 14.

(y) Ezek. xxxvi. 25

(z) 1 John ii. 20.

(a) Luke iii. 16.

fore at a great distance from us. But we know, that he benefits none but those who have him for their "head" and "elder brother," and who have "put him on." (b) This union alone, renders his advent in the character of a Saviour available to us. We learn the same truth from that sacred marriage, by which we are made flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, and therefore one with him. (c) It is only by his Spirit that he unites himself with us; and by the grace and power of the same Spirit we are made his members; that he may keep us with himself, and we may mutually enjoy him.

IV. But faith being his principal work, is the object principally referred to in the most frequent expressions of his power and operation; because it is the only medium by which he leads us into the light of the Gospel; according to the declaration of John, that "Christ gave power of privilege to become the sons of God, to them that believed on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" (d) where opposing God to flesh and blood, he asserts the reception of Christ by faith by those who would otherwise remain unbelievers, to be a supernatural gift. Similar to which, is this answer of Christ: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven;" (e) which I now merely mention, because I have elsewhere treated it at large. Similar also is the assertion of Paul, that the Ephesians "were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." (f) For this shews, that there is an internal teacher, by whose agency the promise of salvation, which otherwise would only strike the air, or at most our ears, penetrates into our minds. Similar also is his remark, that the Thessalonians were "chosen by God through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth;" (g) by which connection, he briefly suggests, that faith itself proceeds only from the Spirit. John expresses this in plainer terms: "We know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." (h) Again, "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." (i) Therefore

(b) Eph. iv. 15. Rom. viii. 29. Gal. iii. 27.

(c) Eph. v. 30.

(d) John i. 12, 13.

(e) Matt. xvi. 17.

(f) Eph. i. 13.

(g) 2 Thess. ii. 13.

(h) 1 John iii. 24.

(i) 1 John iv. 13.

Christ promised to send to his disciples, "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive," (*k*) that they might be capable of attaining heavenly wisdom. He ascribes to him the peculiar office, of suggesting to their minds all the oral instructions which he had given them. For, in vain would the light present itself to the blind, unless this spirit of understanding would open their mental eyes: so that he may be justly called the key, with which the treasures of the kingdom of heaven are unlocked to us; and his illumination constitutes our mental eyes to behold them. It is therefore that Paul so highly commends the ministry of the Spirit; (*l*) because the instructions of preachers would produce no benefit, did not Christ himself, the internal teacher, draw to him those who were given him by the Father. (*m*) Therefore, as we have stated, that complete salvation is found in the person of Christ: so to make us partakers of it, he "baptizes us with the holy Spirit and with fire," (*n*) enlightening us into the faith of his Gospel, regenerating us so that we become new creatures, and, purging us from profane impurities, consecrates us as holy temples to God.



CHAPTER II.

Faith defined, and its Properties described.

ALL these things will be easily understood when we have given a clearer definition of faith, that the reader may perceive its nature and importance. But it will be proper to recal to his remembrance, what has been already stated; that God hath given us his law as the rule of our conduct, and that, if we are guilty of even the smallest breach of it, we are exposed to the dreadful punishment of eternal death, which he denounces. Again, that since it is not only difficult, but entirely above our strength, and beyond the utmost extent of our ability, to fulfil the law as he requires; if we only view ourselves, and consider what we have demerited, we have not the least hope left, but, as persons rejected by God, are on the verge of eternal perdi-

(*l*) John xiv. 17. (*l*) 2 Cor. iii. 6. (*m*) John vi. 44. (*n*) Luke iii. 16.

tion. In the third place, it has been explained, that there is but one method of deliverance, by which we can be extricated from such a direful calamity, that is the appearance of Christ the Redeemer, by whose means our heavenly Father, commiserating us in his infinite goodness and mercy, hath been pleased to relieve us; if we embrace this mercy with a sincere faith, and rely on it with a constant hope. But we must now examine the nature of this faith, by which all who are the adopted sons of God enter on the possession of the heavenly kingdom: since it is certain, that not every opinion, nor even every persuasion, is equal to the accomplishment of so great a work. And we ought to be the more cautious and diligent in our meditations and inquiries on the genuine property of faith, in proportion to the pernicious tendency of the mistakes of multitudes in the present age on this subject. For a great part of the world, when they hear the word *faith*, conceive it to be nothing more than a common assent to the evangelical history. And even the disputes of the schools concerning faith, by simply styling God the object of it (as I have elsewhere observed), rather mislead miserable souls by a vain speculation, than direct them to the proper mark. For, since God “dwelleth in the light, which no man can approach unto,” (*o*) there is a necessity for the interposition of Christ as the medium of access to him. Whence he calls himself “the light of the world,” (*p*) and in another place, “the way, and the truth, and the life;” because “no man cometh unto the Father,” who is the fountain of life, “but by him;” (*q*) because he alone knows the Father, and reveals him to believers. (*r*)

For this reason Paul asserts, that he esteemed nothing worthy of being known but Jesus Christ; (*s*) and in the twentieth chapter of the Acts declares, that he had preached faith in Christ: and in another place, he introduces Christ speaking in the following manner: “I send thee unto the Gentiles, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith, that is in me.” (*t*) This Apostle tells us, that the glory of God is visible to us in his person, or (which conveys the same idea) that “the light of the knowledge of the

(*o*) 1 Tim. vi. 16.(*p*) John viii. 12.(*q*) John xiv. 6.(*r*) Luke x. 22.(*s*) 1 Cor. ii. 2.(*t*) Acts xxvi. 17, 18.

glory of God" shines "in his face." (u) It is true, that faith relates to the one God; but there must also be added, a knowledge of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. (w) For God himself would be altogether concealed from us, if we were not illuminated with the glory of Christ. For this purpose the Father hath deposited all his treasures with his only-begotten Son, that he might reveal himself in him: and, that by such a communication of blessings, he might express a true image of his glory. For as it has been observed, that we require to be drawn by the Spirit, that we may be excited to seek Christ; so we should also be apprised, that the invisible Father is to be sought only in this image. On which subject, Augustine, treating of the object of faith, elegantly remarks, "that we ought to know whither we should go, and in what way;" and immediately after he concludes, "that he who unites deity and humanity in one person, is the way most secure from all errors; for that it is God towards whom we tend, and man by whom we go: but that both together can be found only in Christ." Nor does Paul, when he speaks of faith in God, intend to subvert what he so frequently inculcates concerning faith, whose stability is wholly in Christ. And Peter most suitably connects them together, when he says, that "by him we believe in God." (x)

II. This evil then, as well as innumerable others, must be imputed to the schoolmen, who have, as it were, concealed Christ, by drawing a veil over him; whereas, unless our views be immediately and steadily directed to him, we shall always be wandering through labyrinths without end. They not only, by their obscure definition diminish, and almost annihilate all the importance of faith, but have fabricated the notion of implicit faith, a term with which they have honoured the grossest ignorance, and most perniciously deluded the miserable multitude. Indeed, to express the fact more truly and plainly, this notion has not only buried the true faith in oblivion, but has entirely destroyed it. Is this faith—to understand nothing, but obediently to submit our understanding to the Church? Faith consists, not in ignorance, but in knowledge; and that, not only

(u) 2 Cor. iv. 6.

(w) John xvii. 3.

(x) 1 Pet. i. 21.

of God, but also of the Divine will. For, we do not obtain salvation by our promptitude to embrace as truth, whatever the Church may have prescribed, or by our transferring to her the province of inquiry and of knowledge. But when we know God to be a propitious Father to us, through the reconciliation effected by Christ, and that Christ is given to us for righteousness, sanctification, and life: by this knowledge, I say, not by renouncing our understanding, we obtain an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. For, when the apostle says, that "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation;" (y) he indicates, that it is not sufficient for a man implicitly to credit what he neither understands, nor even examines: but he requires an explicit knowledge of the divine goodness, in which our righteousness consists.

III. I do not deny (such is the ignorance with which we are enveloped) that many things are very obscure to us at present, and will continue to be so, till we shall have cast off the burden of the flesh, and arrived nearer to the presence of God. On such subjects, nothing would be more proper than a suspension of judgment, and a firm resolution to maintain union with the Church. But, that ignorance combined with humility should, under this pretext, be dignified with the appellation of Faith, is extremely absurd. For faith consists in a knowledge of God and of Christ, (z) not in reverence of the Church. And we see what a labyrinth they have fabricated by this notion of their's, so that the ignorant and inexperienced, without any discrimination, eagerly embrace as oracular, every thing obtruded upon them, under the name of the Church; sometimes even the most monstrous errors. This inconsiderate credulity, though it be the certain precipice of ruin, is, nevertheless, excused by them on the plea that it credits nothing definitively, but with this condition annexed, If such be the faith of the Church. Thus they pretend that truth is held in error, light in darkness, and true knowledge in ignorance. But, not to occupy any more time in refuting them, we only admonish the reader to compare their doctrine with ours: for the perspicuity of the truth will

(y) Rom. x. 10.

(z) John xvii. 3.

of itself furnish a sufficient refutation. For the question with them is not, whether faith be yet involved in many reliques of ignorance, but they positively assert, that persons are possessed of true faith, who are charmed with their ignorance, and even indulge it, provided they assent to the authority and judgment of the Church concerning things unknown: as if the Scripture did not universally inculcate that knowledge is united with faith.

IV. We grant, that during our pilgrimage in the world, our faith is implicit, not only because many things are yet hidden from our view, but because our knowledge of every thing is very imperfect, in consequence of the clouds of error by which we are surrounded. For the greatest wisdom of those who are most perfect, is to improve, and to press forward with patient docility. Therefore, Paul exhorts the faithful, if they differ from each other on any subject, to wait for farther revelation.(a) And, experience teaches us, that till we are divested of the flesh, our knowledge falls far short of what might be wished; in reading also, many obscure passages daily occur, which convince us of our ignorance. With this barrier God restrains us within the bounds of modesty, assigning to every one a measure of faith, that even the most learned teacher may be ready to learn. We may observe eminent examples of this implicit faith in the disciples of Christ, before they were fully enlightened. We see with what difficulty they imbibed the first rudiments; how they hesitated even at the most minute particulars; what inconsiderable advances they made even while hanging on the lips of their Master; and when they ran to the grave at the intelligence of the women, his resurrection was like a dream to them. The testimony already borne by Christ to their possession of faith, forbids us to say that they were entirely destitute of it; indeed, if they had not been persuaded that Christ would rise from the dead, they would have felt no farther concern about him. The women were not induced by superstition to embalm with spices the body of a deceased man, of whose life there was no hope; but though they credited his declarations, whose veracity they well knew; yet the ignorance, which

(a) Phil. iii. 15.

still occupied their minds, involved their faith in darkness, so that they were almost lost in astonishment. Whence also they are said at length to have believed, when they saw the words of Christ verified by facts; not that their faith then commenced, but the seed of faith, which had been latent and as it were dead in their hearts, then shot forth with additional vigour. They had therefore a true but an implicit faith, because they received Christ with reverence as their only teacher: being taught by him, they were persuaded that he was the author of their salvation; and they believed that he came from heaven, that through the grace of the Father he might assemble all his disciples there. And we need not seek a more familiar proof of this point, than that some portion of unbelief is always mixed with faith in every Christian.

V. We may also style that an implicit faith, which in strict propriety is nothing but a preparation for faith. The evangelists relate that many believed, who only being filled with admiration at the miracles of Christ, proceeded no farther than a persuasion that he was the promised Messiah, although they had little or no knowledge of evangelical doctrine. Such reverence, which induced them cheerfully to submit themselves to Christ, is dignified with the title of faith, of which, however, it was merely the commencement. Thus the nobleman, or courtier, who believed the promise of Christ concerning the healing of his son, when he returned to his house, (*b*) according to the testimony of the evangelist, believed again: that is, first he esteemed as an oracle, what he had heard from the lips of Christ; but afterwards he devoted himself to his authority to receive his doctrine. It must be understood, however, that he was docile and ready to learn; that the word *believe* in the first place denotes a particular faith; but in the second place, it numbers him among the disciples who had given their names to Christ. John gives us a similar example in the Samaritans, who believed the report of the woman, so as to run with eagerness to Christ; but who, after having heard him, said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know, that this is indeed the

(*b*) John iv. 50—52

Christ, the Saviour of the world.” (c) Hence it appears, that persons not yet initiated into the first elements, but only inclined to obedience, are called believers; not, indeed, with strict propriety, but because God in his goodness distinguishes that pious disposition with such a great honour. But this docility, connected with a desire of improvement, is very remote from that gross ignorance which stupifies those who are content with such an implicit faith as the papists have invented. For if Paul severely condemns those who are “ever learning, yet never come to the knowledge of the truth;” (d) how much the greater ignominy do they deserve who make it their study to know nothing!

VI. This, then, is the true knowledge of Christ; to receive him, as he is offered by the Father, that is, invested with his Gospel; for, as he is appointed to be the object of our faith, so we cannot advance in the right way to him, without the guidance of the Gospel. The Gospel certainly opens to us those treasures of grace, without which Christ would profit us little. Thus Paul connects faith as an inseparable concomitant with doctrine, where he says, “ye have not so learned Christ; if so be ye have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.” (e) Yet, I do not so far restrict faith to the Gospel, but that I admit Moses and the prophets to have delivered what was sufficient for its establishment; but because the Gospel exhibits a fuller manifestation of Christ, it is justly styled by Paul, “the words of faith and of good doctrine.” (f) For the same reason, in another place, he represents the law as abolished by the coming of faith: (g) comprehending under this term, the new kind of teaching, by which Christ, since his appearance as our Master, has given a brighter display of the mercy of the Father, and a more explicit testimony concerning our salvation. The more easy and convenient method for us will be, to descend regularly from the genus to the species. In the first place, we must be apprised, that faith has a perpetual relation to the word, and can no more be separated from it, than the rays from the sun, whence they proceed. Therefore God proclaims by Isaiah, “Hear, and your soul shall live.” (h) And,

(c) John iv. 42.

(d) 2 Tim. iii. 7.

(e) Eph. iv. 20, 21.

(f) 1 Tim. iv. 6.

(g) Gal. iii. 23—25.

(h) Isaiah lv. 3.

that the word is the fountain of faith, is evident from this language of John: "These are written, that ye might believe." (i) The Psalmist also, intending to exhort the people to faith, says, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice:" (k) and *to hear*, is generally meant *to believe*. Lastly, it is not without reason that in Isaiah, God distinguishes the children of the church from strangers, by this character, that they shall all be his disciples, and be taught by him: (l) for, if this were a benefit common to all, why should he address himself to a few? Correspondent with this, is the general use of the words, "believers," and "disciples," as synonymous, by the evangelists, on all occasions, and by Luke in particular, very frequently in the Acts of the Apostles; in the ninth chapter of which, he extends the latter epithet even to a woman. Wherefore, if faith decline in the smallest degree from this object, towards which it ought to be directed, it no longer retains its own nature, but becomes an uncertain credulity, and an erroneous excursion of the mind. The same divine word is the foundation by which faith is sustained and supported, from which it cannot be moved without an immediate downfall. Take away the word then, and there will be no faith left. We are not here disputing whether the ministry of men be necessary to disseminate the word of God, by which faith is produced, which we shall discuss in another place; but we assert, that the word itself, however it may be conveyed to us, is like a mirror, in which faith may behold God. Whether, therefore, God in this instance use the agency of men, or whether he operate solely by his own power, he always discovers himself by his word to those whom he designs to draw to himself. (m) Whence Paul defines faith as an obedience rendered to the Gospel, and praises the service of faith. (n) For the apprehension of faith is not confined to our knowing that there is a God, but chiefly consists in our understanding what is his disposition towards us. For, it is not of so much importance to us to know what he is in himself, as what he designs to be to us. We find, therefore, that faith is a knowledge of the will of God respecting us, received from his word. And the foundation of this is a previous persuasion

(i) John xx. 31.

(k) Psalm xciv. 7.

(l) Isaiah liv. 13.

(m) Rom. i. 5.

(n) Phil. ii. 17.

of the divine veracity; any doubt of which being entertained in the mind, the authority of the word will be dubious and weak, or rather it will be of no authority at all. Nor is it sufficient to believe that the veracity of God is incapable of deception or falsehood, unless you also admit, as beyond all doubt, that whatever proceeds from him is sacred and inviolable truth.

VII. But as the human heart is not excited to faith by every word of God, we must farther inquire what part of the word it is, with which faith is particularly concerned? God declared to Adam, "Thou shalt surely die;" (*o*) and to Cain, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground:" (*p*) but these declarations are so far from being adapted to the establishment of faith, that of themselves they can only shake it. We do not deny that it is the office of faith to subscribe to the truth of God, whatever be the time, the nature, or the manner of his communications; but our present inquiry is only, what faith finds in the Divine word, upon which to rest its dependence and confidence? When our conscience beholds nothing but indignation and vengeance, how shall it not tremble with fear? And if God be the object of its terror, how should it not fly from him? But faith ought to seek God, not to fly from him. It appears then, that we have not yet a complete definition of faith; since a knowledge of the Divine will indefinitely ought not to be accounted faith. But suppose, instead of will, the declaration of which is often productive of fear and sorrow, we substitute benevolence or mercy? This will certainly bring us nearer to the nature of faith. For we are allured to seek God, after we have learned that salvation is laid up for us with him; which is confirmed to us, by his declaring it to be the object of his care and affection. Therefore we need a promise of grace, to assure us that he is our propitious Father; since we cannot approach to him without it, and it is upon that alone that the human heart can securely depend. For this reason, in the Psalms, mercy and truth are generally united, as being closely connected; because it would be of no avail for us to know the veracity of God, if he did not allure us to himself by his mercy; nor should we embrace his mercy,

(*o*) Gen. ii. 17.

(*p*) Gen. iv. 10.

if he did not offer it with his own mouth. "I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth. Let thy loving-kindness and thy truth continually preserve me." (*q*) Again; "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds." (*r*) Again; "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant." (*s*) Again; "His merciful kindness is great towards us: and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever." (*t*) Again; "I will praise thy name for thy loving-kindness, and for thy truth." (*u*) I forbear to quote what we read in the prophets to the same purport, that God is merciful and faithful in his promises. For it will be temerity to conclude that God is propitious to us, unless he testify concerning himself, and anticipate us by his invitation, that his will respecting us may be neither ambiguous nor obscure. But we have already seen, that Christ is the only pledge of his love; without whom, the tokens of his hatred and wrath are manifest both above and below. Now, since the knowledge of the divine goodness will not be attended with much advantage, unless it lead us to rely upon it, we must exclude that apprehension of it, which is mixed with doubts, which is not uniform and steady, but wavering and undecided. Now the human mind, blinded and darkened as it is, is very far from being able to penetrate and attain to a knowledge of the Divine will; and the heart also, fluctuating in perpetual hesitation, is far from continuing unshaken in that persuasion. Therefore, our mind must be illuminated, and our heart established by some exterior power, that the word of God may obtain full credit with us. Now we shall have a complete definition of faith, if we say, that it is a steady and certain knowledge of the Divine benevolence towards us, which being founded on the truth of the gratuitous promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds, and confirmed to our hearts, by the Holy Spirit.

VIII. But before I proceed any farther, it will be necessary to make some preliminary observations, for the solution of difficulties, which otherwise might prove obstacles in the way of the reader.

(*q*) Psalm xl. 10, 11.(*t*) Psalm cxvii. 2.(*r*) Psalm xxxvi. 5.(*u*) Psalm cxxxviii. 2.(*s*) Psalm xxv. 10.

And first, we must refute the negatory distinction which prevails in the schools, of formal and informal faith. For they imagine, that such as are not impressed with the fear of God, or with any sense of piety, believe all that is necessary to be known in order to salvation; as though the Holy Spirit, in illuminating our hearts to faith, were not a witness to us of our adoption. Yet, in opposition to the whole tenor of Scripture, they presumptuously dignify such a persuasion, destitute of the fear of God, with the name of faith. We need not contend with this definition any farther than by simply describing the nature of faith, as it is represented in the Divine word. And this will clearly evince the ignorance and insipidity of their clamour concerning it. I have treated it in part already, and shall subjoin what remains in its proper place. At present, I affirm, that a greater absurdity than this figment of theirs, cannot possibly be imagined. They maintain faith to be a mere assent, with which every despiser of God may receive as true whatever is contained in the Scripture. But first it should be examined, whether every man acquires faith for himself by his own power, or whether it is by faith that the Holy Spirit becomes the witness of adoption. They betray puerile folly therefore in inquiring whether faith, which is formed by the superaddition of a quality, be the same, or whether it be a new and different faith? It clearly appears, that while they have been trifling in this manner, they never thought of the peculiar gift of the Spirit: for the commencement of faith contains in it the reconciliation by which man draws near to God. But, if they would duly consider that declaration of Paul, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness," (w) they would cease their trifling about this superadded quality. If we had only this one reason, it ought to be sufficient to terminate the controversy: that the assent which we give to the Divine word, as I have partly suggested before, and shall again more largely repeat, is from the heart rather than the head, and from the affections rather than the understanding. For which reason it is called "the obedience of faith," (x) to which the Lord prefers no other obedience: because nothing is more precious to him than

(w) Rom. x. 10.

(x) Rom. i. 5.

his own truth; which, according to the testimony of John the Baptist, (*y*) believers, as it were, subscribe and seal. As this is by no means a dubious point, we conclude at once, that it is an absurdity to say, that faith is formed by the addition of a pious affection to an assent of the mind: whereas, even this assent consists in a pious affection, and is so described in the Scriptures. But another argument offers itself, which is still plainer. Since faith accepts Christ, as he is offered to us by the Father; and he is offered, not only for righteousness, remission of sins, and peace, but also for sanctification and as a fountain of living water: it is certain, that no man can ever know him aright, unless he at the same time receive the sanctification of the Spirit. Or, if any one would wish it to be more clearly expressed, Faith consists in a knowledge of Christ. Christ cannot be known without the sanctification of his Spirit. Consequently, faith is absolutely inseparable from a pious affection.

IX. This passage of Paul, "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing;" (*z*) is generally adduced by them to support the notion of an informal faith unaccompanied with charity: but they overlook the sense in which the apostle uses the word "faith" in this place. For having, in the preceding chapter, treated of the various gifts of the Spirit, among which he has enumerated "divers kinds of tongues, the working of miracles and prophecy," (*a*) and having exhorted the Corinthians to "covet earnestly the best gifts," from which the greatest benefit and advantage would accrue to the whole body of the Church; he adds, "yet shew I unto you a more excellent way:" implying, that all such gifts, whatever be their intrinsic excellence, are yet to be deemed worthless, unless they be subservient to charity: for that, being given for the edification of the Church, if not employed for that purpose, they lose their beauty and value. To prove this, he particularly specifies them, repeating the same gifts, which he had before enumerated under other names. He uses the word "faith" to denote what he had before called powers (*δυναμεις*, *potestates*, *virtutes*), that is, a power of working miracles. This then, whether it be called power or

(*y*) John iii. 33.(*z*) 1 Cor. xiii. 2.(*a*) 1 Cor. xii. 10—31.

faith, being a particular gift of God, which any impious man may both possess and abuse, as the gift of tongues, or prophecy, or other gifts, we need not wonder if it be separated from charity. But the mistake of such persons arises wholly from this; that though the word "faith" is used in many senses, not observing this diversity of signification, they argue as if it had always the same meaning. The passage which they adduce from James in support of the same error, shall be discussed in another place. Now, although for the sake of instruction, when we design to shew the nature of that knowledge of God, which is possessed by the impious, we allow that there are various kinds of faith; yet we acknowledge and preach only one faith in the pious, according to the doctrine of the Scripture. Many men certainly believe that there is a God; they admit the evangelical history and the other parts of Scripture to be true; just as we form an opinion of transactions which are narrated as having occurred in former times, or of which we have ourselves been spectators. There are some who go farther; esteeming the word of God as an undoubted revelation from heaven, not wholly disregarding its precepts, and being in some measure affected both by its denunciations and by its promises. To such persons, indeed, faith is attributed; but by a catachresis, a tropical or improper form of expression: because they do not with open impiety resist, or reject, or contemn the word of God: but rather exhibit some appearance of obedience to it.

X. But this shadow or image of faith, as it is of no importance, so it is unworthy of the name of faith; its great distance from the substantial truth of which, though we shall shew more at large hereafter, there can be no objection to its being briefly pointed out here. Simon Magus (*b*) is said to have believed, who nevertheless, just after, betrays his unbelief. When faith is attributed to him, we do not apprehend, with some, that he merely pretended to it with his lips, while he had none in his heart; but we rather think, that being overcome with the majesty of the Gospel, he did exercise a kind of faith, and perceived Christ to be the author of life and salvation, so as freely to profess himself one of his followers. Thus, in the

(*b*) Acts viii. 13, 18, 19.

Gospel of Luke, those persons are said to believe for a time, in whom the seed of the word is prematurely choked before it fructifies, and those in whom it takes no root, but soon dries up and perishes. We doubt not but such persons, being attracted with some taste of the word, receive it with avidity, and begin to perceive something of its Divine power: so that by the fallacious counterfeit of faith, they impose not only on the eyes of men, but even on their own minds. For they persuade themselves, that the reverence which they shew for the word of God, is real piety; supposing, that there is no impiety but a manifest and acknowledged abuse or contempt of it. But, whatever be the nature of that assent, it penetrates not to the heart, so as to fix its residence there; and though it sometimes appears to have shot forth roots, yet there is no life in them. The heart of man has so many recesses of vanity, and so many retreats of falsehood, and is so enveloped with fraudulent hypocrisy, that it frequently deceives even himself. But let them, who glory in such fountains of faith, know, that in this respect they are not at all superior to devils. Persons of the former description, who hear and understand without any emotion those things, the knowledge of which makes devils tremble, are certainly far inferior to the fallen spirits: and the others are equal to them in this respect, that the sentiments with which they are impressed, finally terminate in terror and consternation.(c)

XI. [I know that it appears harsh to some, when faith is attributed to the reprobate; since Paul affirms it to be the fruit of election. But this difficulty is easily solved: for, though none are illuminated to faith, or truly feel the efficacy of the Gospel, but such as are pre-ordained to salvation; yet, experience shews, that the reprobate are sometimes affected with emotions very similar to those of the elect, so that, in their own opinion, they in no respect differ from the elect.] Wherefore, it is not at all absurd, that a taste of heavenly gifts is ascribed to them by the apostle, and a temporary faith by Christ:(d) not that they truly perceive the energy of spiritual grace and clear light of faith; but because the Lord, to render their guilt more manifest and inexcusable, insinuates himself into their minds, as far as his

(c) James ii. 19.

(d) Heb. vi. 4.

goodness can be enjoyed without the Spirit of adoption. If any one object, that there remains then no farther evidence by which the faithful can certainly judge of their adoption: I reply, that although there is a great similitude and affinity between the elect of God and those who are endued with a frail and transitory faith, yet the elect possess that confidence, which Paul celebrates, so as boldly to "cry, Abba, Father." (e) Therefore, as God regenerates for ever the elect alone with incorruptible seed, so that the seed of life planted in their hearts never perishes; so he firmly seals within them the grace of his adoption, that it may be confirmed and ratified to their minds. But this by no means prevents that inferior operation of the Spirit from exerting itself even in the reprobate. In the mean time the faithful are taught, to examine themselves with solicitude and humility, lest carnal security insinuate itself, instead of the assurance of faith. Besides, the reprobate have only a confused perception of grace, so that they embrace the shadow rather than the substance: because the Spirit properly seals remission of sins in the elect alone, and they apply it by a special faith to their own benefit. Yet the reprobate are justly said to believe that God is propitious to them; because they receive the gift of reconciliation, though in a confused and too indistinct manner: not that they are partakers of the same faith or regeneration with the sons of God; but because they appear, under the disguise of hypocrisy, to have the principle of faith in common with them. [Nor do I deny, that God so far enlightens their minds, that they discover his grace; but he so distinguishes that perception from the peculiar testimony, which he gives to his elect, that they never attain any solid effect and enjoyment.] For he does not, therefore, shew himself propitious to them, by truly delivering them from death, and receiving them under his protection; but he only manifests to them present mercy. But he vouchsafes to the elect alone, the living root of faith, that they may persevere even to the end. Thus we have refuted the objection, that if God truly discovers his grace, it remains for ever: because nothing prevents God from illuminating some with a present perception of his grace, which afterwards vanishes away.

XII. Moreover, though a faith is a knowledge of the benevolence of God towards us, and a certain persuasion of his veracity, yet it is not to be wondered at, that the subjects of these temporary impressions lose the sense of Divine love, which, notwithstanding its affinity to faith, is yet widely different from it. The will of God, I confess, is immutable, and his truth always consistent with itself. But I deny that the reprobate ever go so far as to penetrate to that secret revelation, which the Scripture confines to the elect. I deny, therefore, that they either apprehend the will of God, as it is immutable, or embrace his truth with constancy; because they rest in a fugitive sentiment. Thus a tree, not planted deeply enough to shoot forth living roots, in process of time withers; though for some years it may produce not only leaves and blossoms, but even fruits. Finally, as the defection of the first man was sufficient to obliterate the Divine image from his mind and soul; so we need not wonder, if God enlightens the reprobate with some beams of his grace, which he afterwards suffers to be extinguished. Nor does any thing prevent him from slightly tincturing some with the knowledge of his Gospel, and thoroughly imbuing others with it. It must nevertheless be remembered, that how diminutive and weak soever faith may be in the elect, yet, as the Spirit of God is a certain pledge and seal to them of their adoption, his impression can never be erased from their hearts; but that the reprobate have only a few scattered rays of light, which are afterwards lost: yet, that the Spirit is not chargeable with deception, because he infuses no life into the seed which he drops in their hearts, that it may remain for ever incorruptible, as in the elect. I go still farther; for since it is evident from the tenour of the Scripture, and from daily experience, that the reprobate are sometimes affected with a sense of Divine grace, some desire of mutual love must necessarily be excited in their hearts. Thus Saul had for a time a pious disposition to love God, from whom experiencing paternal kindness, he was allured by the charms of his goodness. But as the persuasion of the paternal love of God is not radically fixed in the reprobate, so they love him not reciprocally with the sincere affection of children, but are influenced by a mercenary disposition; for the spirit of love was given to Christ

alone, that he might instil it into his members. And this observation of Paul certainly extends to none but the elect; "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us:" (f) the same love, which generates that confidence of invocation, which I have before mentioned. Thus, on the contrary, we see that God is wonderfully angry with his children, whom he ceases not to love: not that he really hates them, but because he designs to terrify them with a sense of his wrath, to humble their carnal pride, to shake off their indolence, and to excite them to repentance. Therefore they apprehend him to be both angry with them, or at least with their sins, and propitious to them at the same time; for they sincerely deprecate his wrath, and yet resort to him for succour with tranquillity and confidence. Hence it appears, that faith is not hypocritically counterfeited by some, who nevertheless are destitute of true faith; but, while they are hurried away with a sudden impetuosity of zeal, they deceive themselves by a false opinion. Nor is it to be doubted, that indolence pre-occupies them, and prevents them from properly examining their hearts as they ought to do. It is probable that those persons were of this description, to whom, according to John, "Jesus did not commit himself," notwithstanding that they believed in him, "because he knew all men: he knew what was in man." (g) If multitudes did not depart from the common faith (I style it common, because there is a great similitude and affinity between temporary faith and that which is living and perpetual) Christ would not have said to his disciples, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (h) For he addresses those who have embraced his doctrine, and exhorts them to an increase of faith, that the light which they have received may not be extinguished by their own supineness. Therefore, Paul claims faith as peculiar to the elect, (i) indicating, that many decay, because they have had no living root. Thus also Christ says in Matthew; "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." (k) There is a grosser deception in others, who

(f) Rom. v. 5.

(g) John ii. 24, 25.

(h) John viii. 31, 32.

(i) Titus i. 1.

(k) Matt. xv. 13.

are not ashamed to attempt to deceive both God and men. James inveighs against this class of men, who impiously profane faith by hypocritical pretensions to it. (*l*) Nor would Paul require from the children of God, a "faith unfeigned," (*m*) but because multitudes presumptuously arrogate to themselves what they possess not, and with their vain pretences deceive others, and sometimes even themselves. Therefore, he compares a good conscience to a vessel, in which faith is kept; because many "having put away a good conscience, concerning faith have made shipwreck." (*n*)

XIII. We must also remember the ambiguous signification of the word *faith*: for, frequently faith signifies the sound doctrine of piety, as in the place which we have just cited, and in the same epistle, where Paul says, that deacons must hold "the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." (*o*) Also where he predicts, the apostacy of some "from the faith." (*p*) But, on the contrary, he says, that Timothy had been "nourished up in the words of faith." (*q*) Again, where he says, "avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called; which some professing, have erred concerning the faith:" (*r*) whom in another place he styles, "reprobates concerning the faith." (*s*) Thus also, when he directs Titus to "rebuke them, that they may be sound in the faith:" (*t*) by soundness, he means nothing more than that purity of doctrine, which is so liable to be corrupted and to degenerate through the instability of men. Since "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ," (*u*) whom faith possesses; faith is justly extended to the whole summary of heavenly doctrines with which it is inseparably connected. On the contrary, it is sometimes restricted to a particular object; as when Matthew says, that "Jesus saw their faith," (*w*) who let down the paralytic man through the roof; and when Christ exclaimed respecting the centurion, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." (*x*) But it is probable, that the centurion was wholly intent on the recovery of his servant, a concern

(*l*) James ii. 14.(*m*) 1 Tim. i. 5.(*n*) Ibid. i. 19.(*o*) Ibid. iii. 9.(*p*) Ibid. iv. 1.(*q*) Ibid. iv. 6.(*r*) Ibid. vi. 20, 21. (*s*) 2 Tim. iii. 8.(*t*) Titus i. 13.(*u*) Col. ii. 3.(*w*) Matt. ix. 2. Mark ii. 5.(*x*) Matt. viii. 10.

for whom wholly occupied his mind; yet, because he was contented with the mere answer of Christ, without being importunate for his corporeal presence, it is on account of this circumstance that his faith is so greatly extolled. And we have lately shewn, that Paul uses faith for the gift of miracles; which is possessed by those who are neither regenerated by the Spirit of God, nor serious worshippers of him. In another place also, he uses it to denote the instruction by which we are edified in the faith: for, when he suggests that faith will be abolished, it must undoubtedly be referred to the ministry of the church, which is, at present, useful to our infirmity. In these forms of expression, however, there is an evident analogy. But when the word "faith" is in an improper sense transferred to a hypocritical profession, or to that which falsely assumes the name, it should not be accounted a harsher catachresis, than when the fear of God is used for a corrupt and perverse worship: as when it is frequently said in the sacred history, that the foreign nations, which had been transplanted to Samaria and its vicinity, feared the fictitious deities and the God of Israel; which is like confounding together heaven and earth. But our present inquiry is, what is that faith by which the children of God are distinguished from unbelievers, by which we invoke God as our Father, by which we pass from death to life, and by which Christ, our eternal life and salvation, dwells in us. The force and nature of it, I conceive, I have concisely and clearly explained.

XIV. Now let us again examine all the parts of that definition; a careful consideration of which, I think, will leave nothing doubtful remaining. When we call it knowledge, we intend not such a comprehension as men commonly have of those things which fall under the notice of their senses. For it is so superior, that the human mind must exceed and rise above itself, in order to attain to it. Nor does the mind which attains it comprehend what it perceives, but being persuaded of that which it cannot comprehend, it understands more by the certainty of this persuasion, than it would comprehend of any human object by the exercise of its natural capacity. Wherefore, Paul elegantly expresses it in these terms; "to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to

know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” (y) For he meant to suggest, that what our mind apprehends by faith is absolutely infinite, and that this kind of knowledge far exceeds all understanding. Yet, because God hath revealed to his saints the secret of his will, “which had been hidden from ages and from generations,” (z) therefore, *faith* is in Scripture justly styled, “an acknowledgment;” (a) and by John, “knowledge,” when he asserts, that believers know that they are the sons of God. (b) And they have indeed a certain knowledge of it; but are rather confirmed by a persuasion of the veracity of God, than taught by any demonstration of reason. The language of Paul also indicates this; “whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by sight.” Whence we conclude, that the knowledge of faith consists more in certainty than in comprehension.

XV. To express the solid constancy of the persuasion, we farther say, that it is a certain and steady knowledge. For, as faith is not content with a dubious and versatile opinion, so neither with an obscure and perplexed conception; but requires a full and fixed certainty, such as is commonly obtained respecting things that have been tried and proved. For unbelief is so deeply rooted in our hearts, and such is our propensity to it, that though all men confess with the tongue, that God is faithful, no man can persuade himself of the truth of it, without the most arduous exertions. Especially, when the time of trial comes, the general indecision discloses the fault which was previously concealed. Nor is it without reason that the Holy Spirit asserts the authority of the Divine word in terms of such high commendation, but with a design to remedy the disease which I have mentioned, that the promises of God may obtain full credit with us. “The words of the Lord (says David) are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times.” (c) Again; “The word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.” (d) And Solomon confirms the same, nearly in the same words; “Every word of God is pure.” (e) But, as the hundred and nineteenth Psalm is almost entirely devoted to this subject, it were needless to recite any more tes-

(y) Eph. iii. 18.

(z) Col. i. 26.

(a) Ibid. ii. 2.

(b) 1 John iii. 2.

(c) Psalm xii. 6.

(d) Ibid. xviii. 30.

(e) Prov. xxx. 5.

timonies. Whenever God thus recommends his word to us, he, without doubt, obliquely reprehends our unbelief; for the design of those recommendations is no other, than to eradicate perverse doubts from our hearts. There are also many, who have such conceptions of the Divine mercy, as to receive but very little consolation from it. For they are at the same time distressed with an unhappy anxiety, doubting whether he will be merciful to them; because they confine within too narrow limits that clemency, of which they suppose themselves to be fully persuaded. For they reflect with themselves thus: that his mercy is large and copious, bestowed upon many, and ready for the acceptance of all; but that it is uncertain whether it will reach them also, or rather, whether they shall reach it. This thought, when it stops in the midst of its course, is incomplete. Therefore it does not so much confirm the mind with secure tranquillity, as disturb it with restless hesitation. But there is a very different sentiment of full assurance (*πληροφορίας*), which is always attributed to faith in the Scriptures; and which places the goodness of God, that is clearly revealed to us, beyond all doubt. But this cannot take place, unless we have a real sense and experience of its sweetness in ourselves. Wherefore, the apostle from faith deduces confidence, and from confidence, boldness. For this is his language; “In Christ we have boldness and access, with confidence by the faith of him.” (*f*) These words imply, that we have no right faith, but when we can venture with tranquillity into the Divine presence. This boldness arises only from a certain confidence of the Divine benevolence and our salvation; which is so true, that the word “faith” is frequently used for confidence.

XVI. The principal hinge on which faith turns is this, that we must not consider the promises of mercy, which the Lord offers, as true only to others and not to ourselves; but rather make them our own, by embracing them in our hearts. Hence arises that confidence, which the same apostle in another place calls “peace;” (*g*) unless any one would rather make peace the effect of confidence. It is a security, which makes the conscience calm and serene before the Divine tribunal, and without

(*f*) Eph. iii. 12.(*g*) Rom. v. 1.

which, it must necessarily be harassed and torn almost asunder with tumultuous trepidation, unless it happen to slumber for a moment in an oblivion of God and itself. And indeed it is but for a moment; for it does not long enjoy that wretched oblivion, but is most dreadfully wounded by the remembrance, which is perpetually recurring of the Divine judgment. In short, no man is truly a believer, unless he be firmly persuaded, that God is a propitious and benevolent Father to him, and promise himself every thing from his goodness; unless he depend on the promises of the Divine benevolence to him, and feel an undoubted expectation of salvation: as the apostle shews in these words; "If we hold fast the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." (*h*) Here he supposes, that no man has a good hope in the Lord, who does not glory with confidence, in being an heir of the kingdom of heaven. He is no believer, I say, who does not rely on the security of his salvation, and confidently triumph over the devil and death, as Paul teaches us in this remarkable peroration: "I am persuaded (says he) that neither death, not life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (*i*) Thus, the same apostle is of opinion, that "the eyes of our understanding" are not truly "enlightened," unless we discover what is the hope of the eternal inheritance, to which we are called. (*k*) And he every where inculcates, that we have no just apprehensions of the Divine goodness, unless we derive from it a considerable degree of assurance.

XVII. But some one will object, that the experience of believers is very different from this; for that, in recognising the grace of God towards them, they are not only disturbed with inquietude (which frequently befalls them), but sometimes also tremble with the most distressing terrors. The vehemence of temptations, to agitate their minds, is so great, that it appears scarcely compatible with that assurance of faith of which we have been speaking. We must therefore solve this difficulty, if we mean to support the doctrine we have advanced. When we inculcate, that faith ought to be certain and secure, we conceive

(*h*) Heb. iii. 14.(*i*) Rom. viii. 38.(*k*) Eph. i. 18

not of a certainty attended with no doubt, or of a security interrupted by no anxiety: but we rather affirm, that believers have a perpetual conflict with their own diffidence, and are far from placing their consciences in a placid calm, never disturbed by any storms. Yet, on the other hand, we deny, however they may be afflicted, that they ever fall and depart from that certain confidence which they have conceived in the Divine mercy. The Scripture proposes no example of faith more illustrious or memorable than David, especially if you consider the whole course of his life. Yet, that his mind was not invariably serene, appears from his innumerable complaints, of which it will be sufficient to select a few. When he rebukes his soul for turbulent emotions, is he not angry with his unbelief? “Why (says he) are thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God.” (l) And, certainly, that consternation was an evident proof of diffidence, as though he supposed himself to be forsaken by God. In another place also, we find a more ample confession: “I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes.” (m) In another place, also, he debates with himself in anxious and miserable perplexity, and even raises a dispute concerning the nature of God: “Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Will the Lord cast off for ever?” What follows is still harsher; “And I said, I must die; these are the changes of the right hand of the Most High.” (n) For, in a state of despair, he consigns himself to ruin; and not only confesses that he is agitated with doubts, but as vanquished in the conflict, considers all as lost; because God hath deserted him, and turned to his destruction that hand which used to support him. Wherefore, it is not without reason that he says, “Return unto thy rest, O my soul:” (o) since he had experienced such fluctuations amidst the waves of trouble. And yet, wonderful as it is, amidst these concussions, faith sustains the hearts of the pious, and truly resembles the palm-tree, rising with vigour undiminished by any burdens which may be laid upon it, but which can never retard its growth: as David, when he might appear to be overwhelmed, yet chiding himself,

(l) Psalm xlii. 5.

(n) Ibid. lxxvii. 7, 9, 10.

(m) Ibid. xxxi. 22.

(o) Ibid. cxvi. 7.

ceased not to aspire towards God. Indeed, he who, contending with his own infirmity, strives in his anxieties to exercise faith, is already in a great measure victorious. Which we may infer from such passages as this: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord." (*p*) He reproves himself for timidity, and repeating the same twice, confesses himself to be frequently subject to various agitations. In the mean time, he is not only displeased with himself for these faults, but ardently aspires towards the correction of them. Now, if we enter into a close and correct examination of his character and conduct, and compare him with Ahaz, we shall discover a considerable difference. Isaiah is sent to convey consolation to the anxiety of the impious and hypocritical king; he addresses him in these words; "Take heed, and be quiet; fear not," &c. (*q*) But what effect had the message on him? As it had been before said, that "his heart was moved, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind," (*r*) though he heard the promise, he ceased not to tremble. This therefore is the proper reward and punishment of infidelity; so to tremble with fear, that he who opens not the gate to himself by faith, in the time of temptation departs from God: but, on the contrary, believers, whom the weight of temptations bends and almost oppresses, constantly emerge from their distresses, though not without trouble and difficulty. And because they are conscious of their own imbecility, they pray with the Psalmist, "Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth." (*s*) By these words we are taught, that they sometimes become dumb, as though their faith were destroyed; yet, that they neither fail nor turn their backs, but persevere in their conflict, and arouse their inactivity by prayer, that they may not be stupified by self-indulgence.

XVIII. To render this intelligible, it is necessary to recur to that division of the flesh and the spirit, which we noticed in another place, and which most clearly discovers itself in this case. The pious heart therefore perceives a division in itself, being partly affected with delight through a knowledge of the Divine goodness; partly distressed with sorrow, through a

(*p*) Psalm xxvii. 14.(*q*) Isaiah vii. 4.(*r*) Ibid. vii. 2.(*s*) Psalm cxix. 43.

sense of its own calamity; partly relying on the promise of the Gospel; partly trembling at the evidence of its own iniquity; partly exulting in the knowledge of life; partly alarmed by the fear of death. This variation happens through the imperfection of faith; since we are never so happy, during the present life, as to be cured of all diffidence, and entirely filled and possessed by faith. Hence those conflicts, in which the diffidence adhering to the reliques of the flesh, rises up in opposition to the faith formed in the heart. But if, in the mind of a believer, assurance be mixed with doubts, do we not always come to this point, that faith consists not in a certain and clear, but only in an obscure and perplexed knowledge of the Divine will respecting us? Not at all. For, if we are distracted by various thoughts, we are not therefore entirely divested of faith; neither, though harassed by the agitations of diffidence, are we therefore emerged in its abyss; nor, if we be shaken, are we therefore overthrown. For the invariable issue of this contest is, that faith at length surmounts those difficulties, from which, while it is encompassed with them, it appears to be in danger.

XIX. Let us sum it up thus: As soon as the smallest particle of grace is infused into our minds, we begin to contemplate the Divine countenance as now placid, serene, and propitious to us: it is indeed a very distant prospect, but so clear, that we know we are not deceived. Afterwards, in proportion as we improve, for we ought to be continually improving by progressive advances, we arrive at a nearer, and therefore more certain view of him, and by continual habit he becomes more familiar to us. Thus we see, that a mind illuminated by the knowledge of God, is at first involved in much ignorance, which is removed by slow degrees. Yet, it is not prevented either by its ignorance of some things, or by its obscure view of what it beholds, from enjoying a clear knowledge of the Divine will respecting itself, which is the first and principal exercise of faith. For, as a man who is confined in a prison, into which the sun shines only obliquely and partially through a very small window, is deprived of a full view of that luminary, yet clearly perceives its splendour, and experiences its beneficial influence: thus we, who are bound with terrestrial and corporeal fetters, though surrounded on all sides with great

obscurity, are nevertheless illuminated sufficiently for all the purposes of real security, by the light of God shining ever so feebly to discover his mercy.

XX. The apostle beautifully inculcates both these ideas in various places. For when he says, that “we know in part, and we prophesy in part, and see through a glass darkly,” (t) he indicates, how very slender a portion of that wisdom which is truly Divine, is conferred upon us in the present life. For although these words imply, not only that faith remains imperfect as long as we groan under the burden of the flesh, but that our imperfection renders it necessary for us to be unremittingly employed in acquiring farther knowledge; yet he suggests, that it is impossible for our narrow capacity to comprehend that which is infinite. And this Paul predicates concerning the whole Church: though every individual of us is obstructed and retarded by his own ignorance, from making that progress which might be wished. But what a sure and certain experience even the smallest particle of faith gives us of itself, the same apostle shews in another place, where he asserts, that “we, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.” (u) Such profound ignorance, must necessarily involve much doubt and trepidation; especially as our hearts are, by a kind of natural instinct, inclined to unbelief. Besides, temptations, various and innumerable, frequently assail us with great violence. Above all, our own conscience, oppressed by its incumbent load of sin, sometimes complains and groans within itself, sometimes accuses itself, sometimes murmurs in secret, and sometimes is openly disturbed. Whether, therefore, adversity discover the wrath of God, or the conscience find in itself any reason or cause of it, thence unbelief derives weapons to oppose faith, which are perpetually directed to this object, to persuade us, that God is angry with us, and inimical to us; that we may not hope for any assistance from him, but may dread him as our irreconcilable enemy.

XXI. To sustain these attacks, faith arms and defends itself with the word of the Lord. And when such a temptation as this assails us, that God is our enemy, because he is angry with

(t) 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 12.

(u) 2 Cor. iii. 18.

us; faith, on the contrary, objects, that he is merciful even when he afflicts, because chastisement proceeds rather from love than from wrath. When it is pressed with this thought, that God is an avenger of iniquities, it opposes the pardon provided for all offences, whenever the sinner makes application to the Divine clemency. Thus, the pious mind, how strangely soever it may be agitated and harassed, rises at length superior to all difficulties, nor ever suffers its confidence in the Divine mercy to be shaken: the various disputes which exercise and fatigue it, terminate rather in the confirmation of that confidence. It is a proof of this, that when the saints conceive themselves to feel most of the vengeance of God, they still confide their complaints to him, and when there is no appearance of his hearing them, they continue to call upon him. For, what end would be answered by addressing complaint to him, from whom they expected no consolation? And they would never be disposed to call upon him, unless they believed him to be ready to assist them. (w) Thus the disciples, whom Christ reprehends for the weakness of their faith, complained indeed that they were perishing, but still they implored his assistance. Nor when he chides them on account of their weak faith, does he reject them from the number of his children, or class them with unbelievers; but he excites them to correct that fault. Therefore, we repeat the assertion already made, that faith is never eradicated from a pious heart, but continues firmly fixed, however it may be shaken and seem to bend this way or that; that its light is never so extinguished or smothered, but that it lies at least concealed under embers: and that this is an evident proof, that the word, which is an incorruptible seed, produces fruit similar to itself, whose germ never entirely perishes. For, though it is the last cause of despair that can happen to saints, to perceive, according to their apprehension of present circumstances, the hand of God lifted up for their destruction; yet Job asserts the extent of his hope to be such, that though he should be slain by him, he would continue to trust in him. (x) This, then, is the real state of the case: Unbelief is not inwardly predominant in the hearts of the pious, but it assails them from without; nor do its weapons mortally wound them,

(w) Matt. viii. 25.

(x) Job xiii. 15.

they only molest them, or at least inflict such wounds as are curable. For faith, according to Paul, serves us as a shield, which being opposed to hostile weapons, receives their blows, and entirely repels them, or at least breaks their force, so that they penetrate no vital part. When faith is shaken, therefore, it is just as if a soldier, otherwise bold, were constrained by a violent stroke of a javelin, to change his position and retreat a little: but when faith itself is wounded, it is just as if his shield were broken by a blow, yet not pierced through. For the pious mind will always recover so far as to say, with David, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." (y) To walk in the gloom of death is certainly terrible; and believers, whatever degree of firmness they have, cannot but dread it. But when this thought prevails, that God is present with them, and concerned for their salvation, fear at once gives way to security. But, as Augustine says, whatever powerful engines the devil erects against us, when he possesses not the heart, which is the residence of faith, he is kept at a distance. Thus, if we judge from the event, believers not only escape in safety from every battle, so that receiving an accession of vigour, they are soon after prepared to enter the field again; but we see the accomplishment of what John says, in his canonical epistle; "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (z) For he affirms, that it will be not only victorious in one or in a few battles, or against some particular assault, but that it will overcome the whole world, though it should be attacked a thousand times.

XXII. There is another species of fear and trembling, by which, nevertheless, the assurance of faith is so far from being impaired, that it is more firmly established. That is, when believers, considering the examples of the Divine vengeance against the impious as lessons given to them, are solicitously cautious not to provoke the wrath of God against themselves by the same crimes; or, when feeling their own misery, they learn to place all their dependence on the Lord, without whom, they perceive themselves to be more inconstant and transient

(y) Psalm xxiii. 4.

(z) 1 John v. 4.

than the wind. For when the apostle, by a representation of the punishments, which the Lord formerly inflicted on the Israelitish nation, alarms the fears of the Corinthians, lest they should involve themselves in the same calamities, (a) he in no respect weakens their confidence, but shakes off the indolence of the flesh, by which faith is rather impaired than confirmed. Nor, when from the fall of the Jews, he takes an occasion to exhort him that standeth, to beware lest he fall, (b) does he direct us to waver, as though we were uncertain of our stability; but only forbids all arrogance and presumptuous overweening confidence in our own strength, that the Gentiles may not proudly insult over the expelled Jews, into whose place they have been received. (c) In that passage, however, he not only addresses believers, but in his discourse also includes hypocrites, who gloried merely in external appearance. For he admonishes not men individually, but instituting a comparison between the Jews and the Gentiles, after having shewn that the rejection of the former was a righteous punishment for their unbelief and ingratitude, he exhorts the latter not to lose, by pride and haughtiness, the grace of adoption recently transferred to them. But as, in the general rejection of the Jews, there remained some of them who fell not from the covenant of adoption, so among the Gentiles there might possibly arise some, who, destitute of true faith, would only be inflated with foolish and carnal confidence, and thus abuse the goodness of God to their own ruin. But though you should understand this to be spoken to the elect and believers, no inconvenience would result from it. For it is one thing to repress the temerity, which from remaining carnality sometimes discovers itself in the saints, that it may not produce vain confidence; and another to strike the conscience with fear, that it may not rely with full security on the mercy of God.

XXIII. Moreover, when he teaches us to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,” (d) he only requires us to accustom ourselves, with great self-humiliation, to look up to the power of the Lord. For nothing arouses us to repose all confidence and assurance of mind on the Lord, so much as diffidence of ourselves, and anxiety arising from a conscious-

(a) 1 Cor. x. 11.

(b) Ibid. x. 12.

(c) Rom. xi. 10.

(d) Phil. ii. 11.

ness of our own misery. In which sense, we must understand this declaration of the Psalmist, "I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy, and in thy fear will I worship." (e) Whence he beautifully connects the confidence of faith, which relies on the mercy of God, with that religious fear by which we ought to be affected, whenever we come into the presence of the Divine Majesty, and from its splendour, discover our extreme impurity. Solomon also truly pronounces, "Happy is the man who feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." (f) But he intends that fear which will render us more cautious, not such as would afflict and ruin us; such as, when the mind, confounded in itself, recovers itself in God, dejected in itself, finds consolation in him, and despairing of itself, revives with confidence in him. Wherefore, nothing prevents believers from being distressed with fear, and at the same time enjoying the most serene consolation; as they now turn their eyes towards their own vanity, and now direct the attention of their mind to the truth of God. How can fear and faith, it will be asked, both reside in the same mind? Just as, on the contrary, insensibility and anxiety. For though the impious endeavour to acquire a habit of insensibility, that they may not be disquieted by the fear of God, the judgment of God follows them so closely, that they cannot attain the object of their desires. So nothing prevents God from training his people to humility, that in their valiant warfare they may restrain themselves within the bounds of modesty. And that this was the design of the apostle appears from the context, where, as the cause of fear and trembling, he assigns the good pleasure of God, by which he gives to his people both rightly to will, and strenuously to perform. In the same sense we should understand this prediction: "The children of Israel shall fear the Lord and his goodness:" (g) for not only piety produces a reverence of God, but also the sweetness of grace fills a man that is dejected in himself, with fear and admiration; causing him to depend upon God, and humbly submit himself to his power.

XXIV. Yet we give no encouragement to the very pestilent

(e) Psalm v. 7.

(f) Prov. xxviii. 14.

(g) Hosea iii. 5.

philosophy, begun to be broached by some semi-papists in the present day. For, being unable to defend that gross notion of faith as a doubtful opinion, which has been taught in the schools, they resort to another invention, and propose a confidence mixed with unbelief. They confess, that whenever we look to Christ, we find in him a sufficient ground of comfortable hope; but because we are always unworthy of all those blessings which are offered to us in Christ, they wish us to fluctuate and hesitate in the view of our own unworthiness. In short, they place the conscience in such a state between hope and fear, that it alternately inclines to both. They also connect hope and fear together, so that when the former rises it depresses the latter, and when the latter lifts its head the former falls. Thus Satan, finding that those open engines, which he heretofore employed to destroy the assurance of faith, are now no longer of any avail, secretly endeavours to undermine it. But what kind of confidence would that be, which should frequently give way to despair? If you consider Christ (say they), salvation is certain: if you return to yourself, condemnation is certain. Diffidence and good hope therefore must of necessity alternately prevail in your mind. As though we ought to consider Christ as standing apart from us, and not rather as dwelling within us. For we therefore expect salvation from him, not because he appears to us at a great distance, but because, having engrafted us into his body, he makes us partakers not only of all his benefits, but also of himself. Wherefore, I thus retort their own argument. If you consider yourself, condemnation is certain; but since Christ with all his benefits is communicated to you, so that all that he has becomes yours, and you become a member of him, and one with him; his righteousness covers your sins; his salvation supersedes your condemnation; he interposes with his merit, that your unworthiness may not appear in the Divine presence. Indeed, the truth is, that we ought by no means to separate Christ from us, or ourselves from him; but, with all our might firmly to retain that fellowship by which he hath united us to himself. Thus the apostle teaches us: "The body (says he) is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness." (h) According to this frivolous notion of these

persons, he ought to have said, Christ indeed hath life in himself; but you, being sinners, remain obnoxious to death and condemnation. But he speaks in a very different manner; for he states, that the condemnation which we merit in ourselves is swallowed up by the salvation of Christ: and in confirmation of this, uses the same argument as I have adduced, that Christ is not without us, but dwells within us; and not only adheres to us by an indissoluble connection of fellowship, but by a certain wonderful communion coalesces daily more and more into one body with us, till he becomes altogether one with us. Nor do I deny, what I have lately said, that some interruptions of faith at times occur, as its imbecility is by the force of violence inclined to this or the other direction. Thus, in the thick gloom of temptations its light is smothered: but, whatever befalls it, it never discontinues its efforts in seeking God.

XXV. Bernard reasons in a similar manner, when he professedly discusses this subject, in the Fifth Homily, on the Dedication of the Temple. "By the goodness of God, meditating sometimes on the soul, I thing I discover in it, as it were, two opposite characters. If I view it as it is in itself and of itself, I cannot utter a greater truth concerning it, than that it is reduced to nothing. What need is there at present to enumerate all its miseries, how it is loaded with sins, enveloped in darkness, entangled with allurements, inflamed with inordinate desires, subject to the passions, filled with illusions, always prone to evil, inclined to every vice, and finally full of ignominy and confusion? Now if even our righteousness, when viewed in the light of truth, be found to be "as filthy rags;" (i) what judgment will be formed of our acknowledged unrighteousness? "If the light that is in" us "be darkness, how great is that darkness?" (k) What then? Man is undoubtedly become like vanity: man is reduced to nothing; man is nothing. Yet how is he entirely nothing, whom God magnifies? How is he nothing, on whom the heart of God is fixed? Brethren, let us revive again. Although we are nothing in our own hearts, perhaps there may be something for us latent in the heart of God. O Father of mercies, O Father of the miserable, how dost thou fix thine

(i) Isaiah lxiv. 6.

(k) Matt. vi. 23.

heart on us! For thine heart is where thy treasure is. But how are we thy treasure, if we are nothing? All nations are before thee, as though they existed not; they must be considered as nothing. That is, before thee; not within thee: thus it is in the judgment of thy truth; but not thus in the affection of thy clemency. Thou callest things which are not, as though they were; and therefore they are not, because thou callest things which are not; yet they are, because thou callest them. For though they are not, with reference to themselves; yet with thee they are: according to this expression of Paul, “Not of works, but of him that calleth.” (1) After this, Bernard says, that there is a wonderful connection between these two considerations. Things which are connected with each other, certainly do not reciprocally destroy each other; which he also more plainly declares in the following conclusion: “Now, if we diligently examine what we are in both considerations; how in one view we are nothing, and in the other how we are magnified; I conceive that our boasting appears to be restrained; but perhaps it is more increased, and indeed established, that we may glory not in ourselves, but in the Lord. If we reflect, if he hath decreed to save us, we shall shortly be delivered: this is sufficient to recover us. But ascending to a loftier and more extensive prospect, let us seek the city of God, let us seek his temple, let us seek his palace, let us seek his spouse. I have not forgotten, but with fear and reverence I say, We are; but in the heart of God. We are; but by his condescending favour, not by our own merit.”

Now, the fear of the Lord, which is universally ascribed to all the saints, and which is called sometimes “the beginning of wisdom,” (m) sometimes “wisdom” (n) itself, although it be but one, proceeds from a twofold apprehension of him. For God requires the reverence of a Father and of a Master. Therefore, he who truly desires to worship him, will study to pay him the obedience of a son and the submission of a servant. The Lord, by the prophet, distinguishes the obedience which is paid to him as a father, by the appellation of honour; and the service which he receives as a master, by that of fear. “A son (says he) honoureth his father, and a servant his

(1) Rom. ix. 11. (m) Psalm cxi. 10. (n) Prov. i. 7.—ix. 10. Job xxviii. 28.

master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear?" (o) But notwithstanding his distinction between them, you see how he confounds them together. Let the fear of the Lord therefore with us, be a reverence mingled with this honour and fear. Nor is it surprising, that the same mind cherishes both these affections; for he who considers what a father God is to us, has ample reason, even though there were no hell, to dread his displeasure more than any death. But, such is the propensity of our nature to the licentiousness of transgression, that in order to restrain it by every possible method, we should at the same time indulge this reflection, that all iniquity is an abomination to the Lord, under whose power we live, and whose vengeance they will not escape, who provoke his wrath against them by the wickedness of their lives.

XXVII. Now the assertion of John, that "there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment:" (p) is not at all repugnant to what we have advanced. For he speaks of the fear of unbelief, between which and the fear of believers there is a wide difference. For the impious fear not God from a dread of incurring his displeasure, if they could do it with impunity; but because they know him to be armed with vindictive power, they tremble with horror at hearing of his wrath. And thus also they fear his wrath, because they apprehend it to be impending over them, because they every moment expect it to fall on their heads. But the faithful, as we have observed, fear his displeasure more than punishment, and are not disturbed with the fear of punishment, as though it were impending over them, but are rendered more cautious that they may not procure it. Thus the apostle, when addressing believers, says, "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for, because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience or unbelief." (q) He denounces not its descending on them; but admonishes them to consider the wrath of the Lord prepared for the impious, on account of the crimes which he had enumerated, that they may avoid tempting it. It seldom happens, however, that the

(o) Mal. i. 6.

(p) 1 John iv. 18.

(q) Eph. v. 6. Col. iii. 6

reprobate are aroused merely by simple threatenings; but, on the contrary, being already obdurate and insensible, when God thunders from heaven, if it be only in words, they rather harden themselves in rebellion: but when they feel the stroke of his hand, they are compelled to fear him, whether they will or not. This is commonly called a servile fear, in opposition to a filial fear, which is ingenuous and voluntary. Some persons curiously introduce an intermediate species of fear; because that servile and constrained affection sometimes subdues men's minds, so that they voluntarily approach to the fear of God.

XXVIII. Now in the Divine benevolence, which is affirmed to be the object of faith, we apprehend the possession of salvation and everlasting life to be obtained. For, if no good can be wanting when God is propitious, we have a sufficient certainty of salvation, when he himself assures us of his love. "O God, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved," (*r*) says the Psalmist. Hence the Scriptures represent this as the sum of our salvation, that he hath "abolished" all "enmity," (*s*) and received us into his favour. In which they imply, that since God is reconciled to us, there remains no danger, but that all things will prosper with us. Wherefore faith, having apprehended the love of God, hath promises for the present life and the life to come, and a solid assurance of all blessings; but it is such an assurance as may be derived from the Divine word. For faith certainly promises itself neither longevity, nor honour, nor wealth, in the present state; since the Lord hath not been pleased to appoint any of these things for us: but is contented with this assurance, that, whatever we may want of the conveniences or necessities of this life, yet God will never leave us. But its principal security consists in an expectation of the future life, which is placed beyond all doubt by the word of God. For, whatever miseries and calamities may on earth await those who are the objects of the love of God, they cannot prevent the Divine benevolence from being a source of complete felicity. Therefore, when we meant to express the perfection of blessedness, we have mentioned the grace of God, as the fountain from which every species of blessings flows down

(*r*) Psalm lxxx. 5.(*s*) Eph. ii. 14, 15.

to us. And we may generally observe in the Scriptures, that when they treat not only of eternal salvation, but of any blessing we enjoy, our attention is recalled to the love of God. For which reason David says, that "The loving-kindness of God," when experienced in a pious heart, "is better" and more desirable "than life" itself. (*t*) Finally, if we have an abundance of all things to the extent of our desires, but are uncertain of the love or hatred of God, our prosperity will be cursed, and therefore miserable. But if the paternal countenance of God shine on us, even our miseries will be blessed, because they will be converted into aids of our salvation. (*u*) Thus Paul, after an enumeration of all possible adversities, glories that they can never separate us from the love of God: and in his prayers, he always begins with the grace of God, from which all prosperity proceeds. David likewise opposes the Divine favour alone against all the terrors which disturb us: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death (says he) I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." (*w*) And we always feel our minds wavering, unless, contented with the grace of God, they seek their peace in it, and are deeply impressed with the sentiment of the Psalmist: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance." (*x*)

XXIX. We make the foundation of faith to be the gratuitous promise, for on that faith properly rests. For, although faith admits the veracity of God in all things, whether he command or prohibit, whether he promise or threaten; though it obediently receives his injunctions, carefully observes his prohibitions, and attends to his threatenings; yet with the promise it properly begins, on that it stands, and in that it ends. For it seeks in God for life, which is found not in precepts nor in denunciations of punishments, but in the promise of mercy, and in that only which is gratuitous; for a conditional promise, which sends us back to our own works, promises life to us only if we find it in ourselves. Therefore, if we wish our faith not to tremble and waver, we must support it with the promise of salvation, which is voluntarily and liberally offered us by the

(*t*) Psalm lxiii. 3. (*u*) Rom. viii. 39. (*w*) Psalm xxiii. 4. (*x*) Ibid. xxxiii. 12.

Lord, rather in consideration of our misery, than in respect of our worthiness. Wherefore the apostle denominates the Gospel "the word of faith;" (y) a character which he denies both to the precepts and to the promises of the law; since there is nothing that can establish faith, but that liberal embassy by which God reconciles the world to himself. Hence also the same apostle frequently connects faith with the Gospel: as when he states, that "the ministry of the Gospel was committed to him for obedience to the faith;" that it is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;" that therein is the "righteousness of God, revealed from faith to faith." (z) Nor is this to be wondered at; for the Gospel being "the ministry of reconciliation," (a) there is no other sufficient testimony of the Divine benevolence towards us, the knowledge of which is necessary to faith. When we assert, therefore, that faith rests on the gratuitous promise, we deny not that believers embrace and revere every part of the Divine word, but we point out the promise of mercy as the peculiar object of faith. Thus believers ought to acknowledge God as a judge and avenger of crimes, yet they fix their eyes peculiarly on his clemency; described for their contemplation as "gracious and full of compassion: slow to anger, and of great mercy; good to all, and diffusing his tender mercies over all his works." (b)

XXX. Nor do I regard the clamours of Pighius, or any such characters, who censure this restriction, as though it divided faith, and comprehended only one branch of it. I grant that, as I have already said, the general object of faith (as they express themselves) is the veracity of God, whether he threaten, or give us a hope of his grace. Wherefore, the apostle attributes this to faith, that Noah feared the destruction of the world, while it was yet unseen. (c) If the fear of impending punishment was the work of faith, threatenings ought not to be excluded from the definition of it. This indeed is true: but these cavillers unjustly charge us with denying that faith respects every part of the word of God. For we only intend to establish these two points: first, that it never stands firmly till it comes to the gratuitous promise; secondly, that we are re-

(y) Rom. x. 8.

(z) Ibid. i. 5, 16, 17.

(a) 2 Cor. v. 18.

(b) Psalm cxlv. 8, 9.

(c) Heb. xi. 7.

conciled to God only as it unites us to Christ. Both these points are worthy of observation. We are inquiring for a faith which may distinguish the sons of God from the reprobate, and believers from unbelievers. If any man believes the justice of the Divine commands and the truth of the Divine threatenings, must he therefore be called a believer? By no means. Therefore faith can have no stability, unless it be placed on the Divine mercy. Now to what purpose do we argue concerning faith? Is it not that we may understand the way of salvation? But how is faith saving, but by engrafting us into the body of Christ? There will be no absurdity then, if, in the definition of it, we insist on its principal effect, and as a difference, add to the genus that character which separates believers from unbelievers. In a word, these malevolent men have nothing to carp at in this doctrine, without involving in the same reprehension with us, the apostle Paul, who particularly styles the Gospel, "the word of faith." (*d*)

XXXI. Hence again we infer, what has been before stated, that the word is as necessary to faith, as the living root of the tree is to the fruit; because, according to David, none can trust in God but those who know his name. (*e*) But this knowledge proceeds not from every man's own imagination, but from the testimony which God himself gives of his own goodness. This, the same Psalmist confirms in another place: "Thy salvation according to thy word." (*f*) Again, "Save me: I hoped in thy word." (*g*) Where we must observe the relation of faith to the word, and that salvation is the consequence of it. Yet we exclude not the Divine power, by a view of which, unless faith be supported, it will never ascribe to God the honour that is due to him. Paul seems to relate a trifling or uninteresting circumstance concerning Abraham, when he says, that he was persuaded that God, who had promised him the blessed seed, "was able also to perform." (*h*) In another place, respecting himself, he says, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (*i*) But if any one considers, how

(*d*) Rom. x. 8.(*e*) Psalm ix. 10.(*f*) Ibid. cxix. 41.(*g*) Ibid. cxix. 146, 147.(*h*) Rom. iv. 21.(*i*) 2 Tim. i. 12.

many doubts respecting the power of God frequently intrude themselves, he will fully acknowledge, that they who magnify it as it deserves, have made no small progress in faith. We shall all confess, that God is able to do whatever he pleases, but whilst the smallest temptation strikes us with consternation and terror, it is evident that we derogate from the Divine power, to which we prefer the menaces of Satan in opposition to the promises of God. This is the reason why Isaiah, when he would impress the hearts of the people with an assurance of salvation, discourses in so magnificent a manner concerning the infinite power of God. He frequently appears, after having begun to treat of the hope of pardon and reconciliation, to digress to another subject, and to wander through prolix and unnecessary circumlocutions, celebrating the wonders of the Divine government in the machine of heaven and earth, and the whole order of nature: yet there is nothing but what is applicable to the present subject; for, unless the omnipotence of God be presented to our eyes, our ears will not attend to his word, or not esteem it according to its worth. Moreover, the Scripture there speaks of his effectual power; for piety, as we have elsewhere seen, always makes an useful and practical application of the power of God; and particularly proposes to itself those of his works, in which he hath discovered himself as a father. Hence the frequent mention of redemption in the Scriptures, from which the Israelites might learn, that God, who had once been the author of salvation, would be its everlasting preserver. David also teaches us by his own example, that the private benefits which God hath conferred on an individual, conduce to the confirmation of his faith for the future; even when he seems to have deserted us, we ought to extend our views farther, so as to derive encouragement from his ancient benefits, as it is said in another Psalm: “I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works,” &c. (k) Again, “I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.” (l) But since without the word, all our conceptions of the power and works of God are unprofitable and transient: we have sufficient reason for asserting, that there

(k) Psalm cxliii. 5.

(l) Ibid. lxxvii. 11.

can be no faith, without the illumination of Divine grace. But here a question might be raised, what must be thought of Sarah and Rebecca, both of whom, apparently impelled by the zeal of faith, transgressed the limits of the word. Sarah when she ardently desired the promised son, gave her maid-servant to her husband. Now that she sinned in many respects, is not to be denied; but I now refer to her error in being carried away by her zeal, and not restraining herself within the bounds of the Divine word. Yet it is certain, that this desire proceeded from faith. Rebecca, having been divinely assured of the election of her son Jacob, procures him the benediction by a sinful artifice; she deceives her husband, the witness and minister of the grace of God; she constrains her son to utter falsehoods; she corrupts the truth of God by various frauds and impostures. Finally, by exposing his promise to ridicule, she does all in her power to destroy it. And yet, this transaction, however criminal and reprehensible, was not unaccompanied with faith; because it was necessary to overcome many offences, and earnestly to aspire to that which, without any expectation of worldly advantage, was pregnant with great troubles and dangers. So we must not pronounce the holy patriarch Isaac, to be entirely destitute of faith, because, after having been divinely apprised of the translation of the honour to his younger son, he nevertheless ceases not to be partial to Esau, his first-born. These examples certainly teach that errors are frequently mixed with faith; yet that faith, when real, always retains the pre-eminence. For, as the particular error of Rebecca did not annul the effect of the benediction, so neither did it destroy the faith which generally predominated in her mind, and was the principle and cause of that action. Nevertheless, Rebecca, in this instance, has discovered how liable the human mind is to error, as soon as it allows itself the smallest license. But though our deficiency or imbecility obscures faith, yet it does not extinguish it: in the mean time it reminds us how solicitously we ought to attend to the declarations of God; and confirms what we have said, that faith decays unless it be supported by the word; as the minds of Sarah, Isaac, and Rebecca, would have been lost in their obliquities, if they had not, by the secret restraint of God, been kept in obedience to the word.

XXXII. Again, it is not without reason that we include all the promises in Christ: (*m*) as the apostle in the knowledge of him includes the whole Gospel; and in another place teaches, that "all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen." (*n*) The reason of which is plain. For, if God promises any thing, he gives a proof of his benevolence; so that there is no promise of his which is not a testimony of his love. Nor does it affect the argument, that the impious, when they are loaded with great and continual benefits from the Divine goodness, render themselves obnoxious to a heavier judgment. For since they neither think nor acknowledge that they receive those things from the hand of the Lord, or if ever they acknowledge it, yet they never reflect within themselves on his goodness; they cannot thereby be instructed concerning his mercy, any more than the brutes, who, according to the circumstances of their condition, receive the same effusion of his liberality, but never perceive it. Nor is it any more repugnant to our argument, that by generally rejecting the promises designed for them, they draw down on themselves severer vengeance. For although the efficacy of the promises is manifested only when they have obtained credit with us; yet their force and propriety are never extinguished by our unbelief or ingratitude. Therefore, when the Lord by his promises invites a man not only to receive, but also to meditate on the effects of his goodness, he at the same time gives him a declaration of his love. Whence we must return to this principle, that every promise is an attestation of the Divine love to us. But it is beyond all controversy, that no man is loved by God but in Christ; (*o*) he is the "beloved Son," in whom the love of the Father perpetually rests, and then from him diffuses itself to us: as Paul says, that we are "accepted in the beloved." (*p*) It must therefore be communicated to us by his mediation. (*q*) Wherefore the apostle, in another place, calls him "our peace," (*r*) and elsewhere represents him as the bond by which God is united to us in his paternal love. It follows, that whenever any promise is presented to us, our eyes must be directed to him: and that Paul is correct in stating, that all the promises of God are confirmed and accomplished

(*m*) 1 Cor. ii. 2.(*n*) 2 Cor. i. 20.(*o*) Matt. iii. 17.—xvii. 5(*p*) Eph. i. 6.(*q*) Ibid. ii. 14.(*r*) Rom. viii. 3.

in him. (*s*) This is opposed by some examples. For it is not credible that Naaman the Syrian, when he inquired of the prophet respecting the right method of worshipping God, (*t*) was instructed concerning the Mediator; yet his piety is commended. Cornelius, (*u*) a Gentile and Roman, could scarcely be acquainted with what was not universally or clearly known among the Jews; yet, his benefactions and prayers were acceptable to God: and the sacrifices of Naaman received the approbation of the prophet, which neither of these persons could have obtained without faith. Similar was the case of the Eunuch to whom Philip was conducted; (*w*) who, unless he had been possessed of some faith, would never have incurred the labour and expense of a long and difficult journey, for the sake of worshipping at Jerusalem. Yet we see how, on being interrogated by Philip, he betrayed his ignorance of the Mediator. I confess, indeed, that their faith was in some measure implicit, not only with respect to the person of Christ, but with respect to the power and office assigned him by the Father. At the same time it is certain that they had imbibed principles, which afforded them some notion of Christ, however slight: nor should this be thought strange; for the Eunuch would not have hastened from a remote country to Jerusalem to adore an unknown God; nor did Cornelius spend so much time, after having once embraced the Jewish religion, without acquainting himself with the rudiments of sound doctrine. With regard to Naaman, it would have been extremely absurd for Elisha, who directed him concerning the minutest particulars, to have been silent on the most important subject. Although their knowledge of Christ therefore might be obscure, yet to suppose that they had none is unreasonable; because they practised the sacrifices of the law, which must have been distinguished by their end, that is, Christ, from the illegitimate sacrifices of the heathens.

XXXIII. This simple and external demonstration of the Divine word ought, indeed, to be fully sufficient for the production of faith, if it were not obstructed by our blindness and perverseness. But such is our propensity to error, that our mind can never adhere to Divine truth; such is our dulness;

(*s*) Rom. xv. 8.

(*u*) Acts x. 31.

(*t*) 2 Kings v. 17—19.

(*w*) Acts viii. 17, 31.

that we can never discern the light of it. Therefore, nothing is effected by the word, without the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Whence it appears, that faith is far superior to human intelligence. Nor is it enough for the mind to be illuminated by the Spirit of God, unless the heart also be strengthened and supported by his power. On this point, the schoolmen are altogether erroneous, who, in the discussion of faith, regard it as a simple assent of the understanding, entirely neglecting the confidence and assurance of the heart. Faith therefore is a singular gift of God in two respects; both as the mind is enlightened to understand the truth of God, and as the heart is established in it. For the Holy Spirit not only originates faith, but increases it by degrees, till he conducts us by it all the way to the heavenly kingdom. "That good thing," says Paul, "which was committed unto thee, keep, by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." (x) If it be urged, that Paul declares the Spirit be given to us "by the hearing of faith," (y) this objection is easily answered. If there were only one gift of the Spirit, it would be absurd to represent the Spirit as the effect of faith, of which he is the author and cause; but when the apostle is treating of the gifts with which God adorns his church, to lead it, by advancements in faith, forwards to perfection, we need not wonder that he ascribes those gifts to faith which prepares us for their reception. It is accounted by the world exceedingly paradoxical, when it is affirmed, that no one can believe in Christ, but he to whom it is given. But this is partly for want of considering the depth and sublimity of heavenly wisdom, and the extreme dulness of man in apprehending the mysteries of God, and partly from not regarding that firm and steadfast constancy of heart which is the principal branch of faith.

XXXIV. But if, as Paul tells us, no one is acquainted with the will of a man but "the spirit of a man which is in him," (z) how could man be certain of the will of God? And if we are uncertain respecting the truth of God in those things which are the subjects of our present contemplation, how should we have a greater certainty of it, when the Lord promises such things

(x) 2 Tim. i. 14.

(y) Gal. iii. 2.

(z) 1 Cor. ii. 11.

as no eye sees and no heart conceives? Human sagacity is here so completely lost, that the first step to improvement, in the divine school, is to forsake it. For, like an interposing veil, (a) it prevents us from discovering the mysteries of God, which are revealed only to babes. (b) "For flesh and blood hath not revealed," (c) and "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (d) The aids of the Spirit therefore are necessary, or rather it is his influence alone that is efficacious here. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (e) but "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God;" (f) and through him "we have the mind of Christ." (g) "No man can come to me (says he) except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him. Every man therefore that heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God." Therefore as we can never come to Christ, unless we are drawn by the Spirit of God; so when we are drawn, we are raised both in mind and in heart above the reach of our own understanding. For illuminated by him, the soul receives as it were new eyes for the contemplation of heavenly mysteries, by the splendour of which it was before dazzled. And thus the human intellect, irradiated by the light of the Holy Spirit, then begins to relish those things which pertain to the kingdom of God, for which before it had not the smallest taste. Wherefore Christ's two disciples receive no benefit from his excellent discourse to them on the mysteries of his kingdom, (h) till he opens their understanding that they may understand the Scriptures. Thus though the apostles were taught by his divine mouth, yet the Spirit of Truth must be sent to them, to instil into their minds the doctrine which they had heard with their ears. (i) The word of God is like the sun shining on all to whom it is preached; but without any benefit to the blind. But in this respect we are all blind by nature; therefore it cannot penetrate into our

(a) 2 Cor. iii. 14.

(b) Matt. xi. 25.

(c) Ibid. xvi. 17.

(d) 1 Cor. ii. 14.

(e) Rom. xi. 34.

(f) 1 Cor. ii. 10.

(g) Ibid. ii. 16.

(h) Luke xxiv. 45.

(i) John xvi. 13.

minds, unless the internal teacher, the Spirit, make way for it by his illumination.

XXXV. In a former part of this work, relating to the corruption of nature, we have shown more at large the inability of men to believe; therefore I shall not fatigue the reader by a repetition of the same things. Let it suffice that faith itself, which we possess not by nature, but which is given us by the Spirit, is called by Paul "the spirit of faith." (*k*) Therefore he prays "that God would fulfil," in the Thessalonians, "all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." (*l*) By calling faith "the work" of God, and "the good pleasure of his goodness," he denies it to be the proper effect of human exertion; and not content with that, he adds that it is a specimen of the divine power. When he says to the Corinthians, that faith stands "not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," (*m*) he speaks indeed of external miracles; but because the reprobate have no eyes to behold them, he comprehends also the inward seal which he elsewhere mentions. And that he may more illustriously display his liberality in so eminent a gift, God deigns not to bestow it promiscuously on all, but by a singular privilege imparts it to whom he will. We have already cited testimonies to prove this point: Augustine, who is a faithful expositor of them, says, it was in order to teach us that the act of believing is owing to the divine gift, not to human merit, that our Saviour declared, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him; (*o*) except it were given unto him of my Father." (*p*) It is wonderful, that two persons hear; one despises, the other ascends. Let him who despises, impute it to himself; let him who ascends, not arrogate it to himself. In another place he says, "Wherefore is it given to one, not to another?" I am not ashamed to reply, This is a depth of the cross. From I know not what depth of the divine judgments, which we cannot scrutinize, proceeds all that we can. What I can, I see; whence I can, I see not; unless that I see thus far, that it is of God. But why one, and not another? It is too much for me: it is an abyss, a depth of the cross. I can exclaim with admiration, but not

(*k*) 2 Cor. iv. 13.

(*o*) John vi. 44.

(*l*) 2 Thess. i. 11.

(*p*) Ibid. 65.

(*m*) 1 Cor. ii. 5.

demonstrate it in disputation. The sum of the whole is this: that Christ, when he illuminates us with faith by the power of his Spirit, at the same time ingrafts us into his body, that we may become partakers of all his benefits.

XXXVI. It next remains, that what the mind has imbibed, be transfused into the heart. For the word of God is not received by faith, if it floats on the surface of the brain; but when it has taken deep root in the heart, so as to become an impregnable fortress to sustain and repel all the assaults of temptation. But if it be true that the right apprehension of the mind proceeds from the illumination of the Spirit, his energy is far more conspicuous in such a confirmation of the heart; the diffidence of the heart being greater than the blindness of the mind; and the furnishing of the heart with assurance, being more difficult than the communication of knowledge to the understanding. Therefore the Spirit acts as a seal, to seal on our hearts those very promises, the certainty of which he hath previously impressed on our minds, and serves as an earnest to confirm and establish them. "After that ye believed," says the apostle, "ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." (q) Do you see how he shews that the hearts of the believers are impressed by the Spirit, as by a seal? How, for this reason, he calls him "the Spirit of promise," because he ratifies the Gospel to us? So, to the Corinthians, he says, "He which hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." (r) And in another place, where he speaks of the confidence and boldness of hope, he makes "the earnest of the Spirit" (s) the foundation of it.

XXXVII. I have not forgotten what I have already observed, and the remembrance of which experience incessantly renews, that faith is agitated with various doubts; so that the minds of the pious are seldom at ease, or at best enjoy not a state of perpetual tranquillity. But whatever assaults they may sustain, they either emerge from the very gulf of temptation, or remain firm in their station. This assurance alone nourishes and supports faith, while we are satisfied of what is declared by the Psalmist, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present

(q) Eph. i. 13.

(r) 2 Cor. i. 21.

(s) 1 Cor. v. 5.

help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." (t) This most delightful repose is celebrated also in another Psalm, "I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me." (u) Not that David enjoyed a happy cheerfulness of soul perpetually flowing on in one even tenour; but having tasted the grace of God according to the proportion of his faith, he glories in intrepidly despising whatever could disquiet the peace of his mind. Therefore the Scripture, intending to exhort us to faith, commands us to "be quiet." In Isaiah, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." (w) In the Psalms, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." (x) With which corresponds the observation of the apostle to the Hebrews, "Ye have need of patience." (y)

XXXVIII. Hence we may judge, how pernicious that dogma of the schoolmen is, that it is impossible to decide concerning the favour of God towards us, any otherwise than from moral conjecture, as every individual may deem himself not unworthy of it. If it must be determined by our works how the Lord is affected towards us, I admit we may attain this object by a very slight conjecture; but as faith ought to correspond to the simple and gratuitous promise, there remains no room for doubting. For with what confidence, pray, shall we be armed, if we reason that God is propitious to us on this condition, provided the purity of our life deserve it? But having determined on a separate discussion of these points, I shall pursue them no farther at present; especially since it is manifest that nothing is more opposite to faith than either conjecture or any thing else approaching to doubt. And they very mischievously pervert to this purpose the observation of the Preacher, which is frequently in their mouths, "No man knoweth whether he is worthy of hatred or of love." (z) For not to observe that this passage is falsely rendered in the Vulgate translation, yet the meaning of Solomon, in such expressions, must be clear even to children; it is, that if any one wishes, from the present state

(t) Psalm xlv. 1, 2.

(u) Ibid. iii. 5.

(w) Isaiah xxx. 16.

(x) Psalm xxxvii. 7.

(y) Heb. x. 36.

(z) Eccl. ix. 1.

*et tamen necesse habere utrum amore an
odio dignus sit.*

of things, to judge who are the objects of divine love or hatred, he labours in vain and distresses himself to no good purpose; since "there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not." (a) Whence it follows that God neither testifies his love to those whom he prospers with success, nor invariably discovers his hatred against those whom he plunges into affliction. And this observation is designed to reprove the vanity of the human understanding; since it is so extremely stupid respecting things most necessary to be known. He had just before said, "that which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast." (b) If any one would infer from this, that the opinion which we hold of the immortality of the soul rests upon mere conjecture, would he not be deservedly deemed insane? Are those persons, then, in a state of sanity, who conclude that there is no certainty of the favour of God, because it cannot be attained from the carnal contemplation of present things?

XXXIX. But they plead that it is rash presumption in men to arrogate to themselves an undoubted knowledge of the divine will. This indeed I would concede to them, if we pretended to subject the incomprehensible counsel of God to the slenderness of our understanding. But when we simply assert with Paul, that "we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God:" (c) what opposition can they make to us, without at the same time insulting the Spirit of God? But if it be a horrible sacrilege to accuse the revelation which proceeds from him either of falsehood, or of uncertainty, or of ambiguity, wherein do we err in affirming its certainty? But they exclaim, that we betray great temerity, in thus presuming to boast of the Spirit of Christ. Who could believe the stupidity of men desirous of being esteemed teachers of the world, to be so extreme as to stumble in this shameful manner at the first elements of religion? It would certainly be incredible to me, if it were not proved by the writings which they have

(a) Eccl. ix. 2.

(b) Eccl. iii. 19.

(c) 1 Cor. ii. 12.

published. Paul pronounces them alone to be the sons of God, who are led by his Spirit: (*d*) these men will have those who are the sons of God to be led by their own spirit, but to be destitute of the Spirit of God. He teaches, that we call God our Father at the suggestion of the Spirit, who "beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:" (*e*) these men, though they forbid not all invocation of God, yet deprive us of the Spirit, by whose influence alone he can be rightly invoked. He denies them to be the servants of Christ, who are not led by the Spirit of Christ: (*f*) these men invent a sort of Christianity, to which the Spirit of Christ is not necessary. He admits no hope of a happy resurrection, unless we experience the Spirit dwelling in us: (*g*) these men fabricate a hope unattended by such experience. But perhaps they will answer, that they deny not the necessity of our being endued with the Spirit; but that it is the part of modesty and humility not to acknowledge our possession of him. What then is the meaning of the apostle in this exhortation to the Corinthians, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not yourselves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (*h*) But, says John, "we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." (*i*) And do we not call in question the promises of Christ, when we wish to be accounted the servants of God without the possession of his Spirit, whom he hath announced that he will pour out upon all his people? (*k*) Do we not injure the Holy Spirit, if we separate faith from him, which is his peculiar work? These being the first rudiments of piety, it is a proof of most miserable blindness, that Christians are censured as arrogant for presuming to glory in the presence of the Holy Spirit, without which glorying Christianity itself cannot exist. But they exemplify the truth of Christ's assertion, "the world knoweth not the Spirit of truth; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (*l*)

XL. Not satisfied with one attempt to destroy the stability

(*d*) Rom. viii. 14.

(*g*) Ibid. viii. 11.

(*k*) Isaiah xlv. 3.

(*e*) Ibid. viii. 16.

(*h*) 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

(*l*) John xiv. 7.

(*f*) Rom. viii. 9.

(*i*) 1 John iii. 24.

of faith, they assail it again from another quarter; by arguing, that although we may form a judgment concerning the favour of God from the present state of our righteousness, yet the knowledge of final perseverance remains in suspense. Truly we are left in possession of an admirable confidence of salvation, if we can only conclude from mere conjecture that we are in the favour of God at the present instant, but are utterly ignorant what may be our fate to-morrow. The apostle expresses a very different opinion: "I am persuaded (says he) that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (m) They attempt to evade the force of this, by a frivolous pretence that the apostle had it from a particular revelation; but they are too closely pressed to avail themselves of this evasion. For he is there treating of the benefits resulting from faith to all believers in common, not of any which were peculiar to his own experience. But the same apostle, they say, in another place, excites fear in us, by the mention of our imbecility and inconstancy. "Let him (says he) that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." (n) It is true; but not a fear by which we may be thrown into consternation, but from which we may learn to "humble ourselves," as Peter expresses it, "under the mighty hand of God." Besides, how preposterous is it to limit to a moment of time the assurance of faith, whose nature it is to go beyond the bounds of the present life, and reach forward to a future immortality? Since believers, then, ascribe it to the grace of God that they are illuminated by his Spirit, and enjoy through faith a contemplation of the heavenly life; such a glorying is so remote from arrogance, that, if any one be ashamed to confess it, he rather betrays extreme ingratitude by a criminal suppression of the divine goodness, than gives an evidence of modesty or humility.

XLI. Because we thought that the nature of faith could not be better or more clearly expressed, than by the substance of the promise, which is the proper foundation on which it rests,

(m) Rom. viii. 38.

(n) 1 Cor. i. 12.

and the removal of which would occasion its fall or annihilation; it is from the promise, therefore, that we have taken our definition, which nevertheless is not at all at variance with that definition, or rather description, of the apostle, which he accommodates to his argument; where he says, that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (o) For by *υποστασις*, which is the word he uses, and which is rendered *substance*, he intends a prop, as it were, on which the pious mind rests and reclines; as though he had said, that faith is a certain and secure possession of those things which are promised to us by God. Unless any one would rather understand *υποστασις* of confidence, to which I shall not object, though I adopt that idea which is the more generally received. Again, to signify that even till the last day, when the books shall be opened, these objects are too sublime to be perceived by our senses, seen with our eyes, or handled with our hands; and that, in the mean time, they are enjoyed by us only as we exceed the capacity of our own understanding, extend our views beyond all terrestrial things, and even rise above ourselves; he has added, that this security of possession relates to things which are the objects of hope, and therefore invisible. For "hope that is seen (as Paul observes), is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (p) But when he calls it an evidence, or proof, or (as Augustine has frequently rendered it) a conviction of things not seen (for the Greek word is *ελεγχος*); it is just as though he had called it the evidence of things not apparent, the vision of things not seen, the perspicuity of things obscure, the presence of things absent, the demonstration of things concealed. For the mysteries of God, of which description are the things that pertain to our salvation, cannot be discerned in themselves and in their own nature; we only discover them in his word, of whose veracity we ought to be so firmly persuaded, as to consider all that he speaks as though it were already performed and accomplished. But how can the mind elevate itself to receive such a taste of the divine goodness, without being all inflamed with mutual love to God? For the plenitude of happiness, which God hath

(o) Heb. xi. 1.

(p) Rom. viii. 24.

reserved for them who fear him, cannot be truly known, but it must at the same time excite a vehement affection. And those whom it has once affected, it draws and elevates towards itself. Therefore we need not wonder if a perverse and malicious heart never feel this affection, which conducts us to heaven itself, and introduces us to the most secret treasures of God and the most sacred recesses of his kingdom, which must not be profaned by the entrance of an impure heart. For what the schoolmen (*q*) advance concerning the priority of charity to faith and hope, is a mere reverie of a distempered imagination, since it is faith alone which first produces charity in us. How much more accurately Bernard speaks! "I believe," says he, "that the testimony of conscience, which Paul calls the rejoicing of the pious, consists in three things. For it is necessary to believe, first of all, that you cannot have remission of sins but through the mercy of God; secondly, that you cannot have any good work, unless he bestow this also; lastly, that you cannot by any works merit eternal life, unless that also be freely given." (*r*) Just after he adds, "that these things are not sufficient, only as a beginning of faith: because in believing that sins can only be forgiven by God, we ought at the same time to consider that they are forgiven us, till we are also persuaded, by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, that salvation is laid up for us: because God forgives sins; he also bestows merits; he likewise confers rewards; it is not possible to remain in this beginning." But these and other things must be treated in the proper places; it may suffice, at present, to ascertain wherein faith itself consists.

XLII. Now wherever this living faith shall be found, it must necessarily be attended with the hope of eternal salvation as its inseparable concomitant, or rather must originate and produce it; since the want of this hope would prove us to be utterly destitute of faith, however eloquently and pompously we might discourse concerning it. For if faith be, as has been stated, a certain persuasion of the truth of God, which can neither lie, nor deceive us, nor be frustrated; they who have felt this assurance, likewise expect a period to arrive when

(*q*) Lombard.(*r*) Bernard. Serm. I. in Annunciat.

God will accomplish his promises, which, according to their persuasion, cannot but be true: so that, in short, hope is no other than an expectation of those things which faith has believed to be truly promised by God. Thus faith believes the veracity of God, hope expects the manifestation of it in due time; faith believes him to be our Father, hope expects him always to act towards us in this character; faith believes that eternal life is given to us, hope expects it one day to be revealed; faith is the foundation on which hope rests, hope nourishes and sustains faith. For as no man can have any expectations from God, but he who has first believed his promises; so also the imbecility of our faith must be sustained and cherished by patient hope and expectation, lest it grow weary and faint. For which reason, Paul rightly places our salvation in hope. (*s*) For hope, while it is silently expecting the Lord, restrains faith, that it may not be too precipitate; it confirms faith, that it may not waver in the divine promises, or begin to doubt of the truth of them; it refreshes it, that it may not grow weary; it extends it to the farthest goal, that it may not fail in the midst of the course, or even at the entrance of it. Finally, hope, by continually renewing and restoring faith, causes it frequently to persevere with more vigour than hope itself. But in how many cases the assistance of hope is necessary to the establishment of faith, will better appear, if we consider how many species of temptations assail and harass those who have embraced the word of God. First, the Lord, by deferring the execution of his promises, frequently keeps our minds in suspense longer than we wish; here it is the office of hope to obey the injunction of the prophet, "though it tarry, wait for it." (*t*) Sometimes he not only suffers us to languish, but openly manifests his indignation: in this case it is much more necessary to have the assistance of hope, that, according to the language of another prophet, we may "wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from Jacob." (*u*) Scoffers also arise, as Peter says, and inquire, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (*w*) And the

(*s*) Rom. viii. 24.(*t*) Heb. ii. 3.(*u*) Isaiah viii. 17.(*w*) 2 Pet. iii. 4.

flesh and the world whisper the same things into our ears. Here faith must be supported by the patience of hope, and kept fixed on the contemplation of eternity, that it may consider "a thousand years as one day." (x)

XLIII. On account of this union and affinity, the Scripture sometimes uses the words faith and hope, without any distinction. For when Peter says that we "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed," (y) he attributes to faith, what was more applicable to hope; and not without reason, since we have already shewn, that hope is no other than the nourishment and strength of faith. Sometimes they are joined together, as in a passage of the same epistle, "that your faith and hope might be in God." (z) But Paul, in the Epistle to the Philippians, (a) deduces expectation from hope; because in patient hope we suspend our desires till the arrival of God's appointed time. All which may be better understood from the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, (b) which I have already cited. In another place, Paul, though with some impropriety of expression, conveys the very same idea in these words: "We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith;" (c) because having embraced the testimony of the Gospel concerning his gratuitous love, we wait till God openly manifests what is now concealed under hope. Now it is easy to see the absurdity of Peter Lombard, in laying a twofold foundation of hope; the grace of God, and the merit of works. Hope can have no other object than faith; and the only object of faith, we have very clearly stated to be the mercy of God; to which both its eyes, if I may be allowed the expression, ought to be directed. But it may be proper to hear what kind of a reason he advances. If, says he, you venture to hope for any thing without merits, it must not be called hope, but presumption. Who is there that will not justly detest such teachers, who pronounce a confidence in the veracity of God to be temerity and presumption? For whereas it is the will of the Lord that we should expect every thing from his goodness, they assert that it is presump-

(x) Psalm xc. 4. 2 Pet. iii. 8.

(y) 1 Pet. i. 5.

(z) Ibid. i. 21.

(a) Phil. i. 20.

(b) Heb. x. 36.

(c) Gal. v. 5.

tion to depend and rely upon it. Such a master is worthy of such disciples as he has found in the schools of wranglers! But, as for us, since we see that sinners are enjoined by the oracles of God to entertain a hope of salvation, let us joyfully presume so far on his veracity as to reject all confidence in our own works, to depend solely on his mercy, and venture to cherish a hope of happiness. He, who said "According to your faith be it unto you," (*d*) will not deceive us.



CHAPTER III.

On Repentance.

THOUGH we have already shown, in some respect, how faith possesses Christ, and how by means of faith we enjoy his benefits; yet the subject would still be involved in obscurity, unless we were to add a description of the effects which we experience. The substance of the Gospel is, not without reason, said to be comprised in "repentance and remission of sins." Therefore, if these two points be omitted, every controversy concerning faith will be jejune and incomplete, and consequently of little use. Now since both are conferred on us by Christ, and we obtain both by faith, that is, newness of life and gratuitous reconciliation; the regular method of instruction requires me, in this place, to enter on the discussion of both. But our immediate transition will be from faith to repentance; because, when this point is well understood, it will better appear how man is justified by faith alone and mere pardon, and yet that real sanctity of life (so to speak) is not separated from the gratuitous imputation of righteousness. Now it ought not to be doubted that repentance not only immediately follows faith, but is produced by it. For since pardon, or remission, is offered by the preaching of the Gospel, in order that the sinner, liberated from the tyranny of Satan, from the yoke of sin, and the

miserable servitude of his vices, may remove into the kingdom of God; no one can embrace the grace of the Gospel, but he must depart from the errors of his former life, enter into the right way, and devote all his attention to the exercise of repentance. Those who imagine that repentance rather precedes faith, than is produced by it, as fruit by a tree, have never been acquainted with its power, and are induced to adopt that sentiment by a very insufficient argument.

II. They argue that Jesus Christ and John the Baptist, in their preaching, first exhort the people to repentance; and afterwards add, that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand;” (*e*) that thus the apostles were commanded to preach, and that this (according to the account of Luke) (*f*) was the method followed by Paul. But they superstitiously attend to the connection of the syllables, and disregard the sense and coherence of the words. For when Christ and John preach in this manner, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;” (*g*) do they not derive an argument for repentance from grace itself, and the promise of salvation? The meaning of their language, therefore, is just as though they had said—Since the kingdom of heaven is at hand, therefore repent. For Matthew, having related that John preached in this manner, informs us, that in him was accomplished the prediction of Isaiah concerning “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” But, in the prophet, that voice is commanded to begin with consolation and glad tidings. (*h*) Yet, when we speak of faith as the origin of repentance, we dream not of any space of time which it employs in producing it; but we intend to signify, that a man cannot truly devote himself to repentance, unless he knows himself to be of God. Now no man is truly persuaded that he is of God, except he has previously received his grace. But these things will be more clearly discussed as we proceed. This circumstance perhaps has deceived them, that many are overcome or led to obedience by terrors of conscience, before they have imbibed a knowledge of grace, or have even tasted it. And this is the initial fear,

(*e*) Matt. iii. 2. Ibid. iv. 17.

(*f*) Acts xx. 21.

(*g*) Matt. iii. 2, 3.

(*h*) Isaiah xl. 1, 3.

which some number among the graces, because they perceive it to be nearly connected with true and righteous obedience. But we are not inquiring, at present, in how many ways Christ draws us to himself, or prepares us for the practice of piety: only I assert, that no rectitude can be found but where that Spirit reigns, whom he hath received in order to communicate him to his members. In the next place, according to this passage in the Psalms, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared:" (*i*) no man will ever reverence God, but he who confides in his being propitious to him: no man will cheerfully devote himself to the observance of his law, but he who is persuaded that his services are pleasing to him: and this indulgence in pardoning us, and bearing with our faults, is an evidence of his paternal favour. The same also appears from this exhortation of Hosea, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up:" (*k*) because the hope of pardon is added as a stimulus, to prevent them from being stupefied in their sins. But there is not the least appearance of reason in the notion of those who, in order to begin with repentance, prescribe to their young converts certain days, during which they must exercise themselves in repentance; after the expiration of which, they admit them to the communion of evangelical grace. I speak of many of the Anabaptists, especially of those who wonderfully delight in being accounted spiritual; and their companions the Jesuits, and other such worthless men. Such are the effects produced by that spirit of fanaticism, that it terminates repentance within the limits of a few short days, which a Christian ought to extend throughout his whole life.

III. But concerning repentance, some learned men, in times very remote from the present, desiring to express themselves with simplicity and sincerity according to the rule of the Scripture, have said that it consists of two parts, mortification and vivification. Mortification, they explain to be the sorrow of the mind, and the terror experienced from a knowledge of sin and a sense of the divine judgments. For when any one has been brought to a true knowledge of sin, he then begins truly to hate

(*i*) Psalm cxxx. 4.

(*k*) Hos. vi. 1.

and abhor it; then he is heartily displeased with himself, confesses himself to be miserable and lost, and wishes that he were another man. Moreover, when he is affected with some sense of the divine judgment (for the one immediately follows the other), then indeed he is stricken with consternation, he trembles with humility and dejection, he feels a despondency of mind, he falls into despair. This is the first part of repentance, which they have generally styled contrition. Vivification they explain to be the consolation which is produced by faith; when a man, after having been humbled with a consciousness of sin and stricken with the fear of God, afterwards contemplates the goodness of God, and the mercy, grace, and salvation bestowed through Christ, rises from his depression, feels himself reinvigorated, recovers his courage, and as it were returns from death to life. These terms, provided they be rightly understood, are sufficiently adapted to express the nature of repentance: but when they explain vivification of that joy which the mind experiences after its perturbations and fears are allayed, I cannot coincide with them; since it should rather signify an ardent desire and endeavour to live a holy and pious life, as though it were said, that a man dies to himself, that he may begin to live to God.

IV. Others, perceiving this word to have various acceptations in Scripture, have mentioned two kinds of repentance: and, to distinguish them by some character, have called one Legal; in which the sinner, wounded by the envenomed dart of sin, and harassed by the fear of Divine wrath, is involved in deep distress, without the power of extricating himself: the other they style Evangelical; in which the sinner is grievously afflicted in himself, but rises above his distress, and embraces Christ as the medicine for his wound, the consolation of his terrors, and his refuge from all misery. Of legal repentance, they consider Cain, Saul, and Judas, as examples; (*l*) the scriptural account of whose repentance gives us to understand, that from a knowledge of the greatness of their sins they dreaded the Divine wrath, but that considering God only as an avenger and a judge, they perished under that apprehension. Their

(*l*) Gen. iv. 13. 1 Sam. xv. 30. Matt. xxvii. 3, 4.

repentance, therefore, was only as it were the antechamber of hell, which having already entered in this life, they began to suffer punishment from the manifestation of the wrath of the Divine Majesty. Evangelical repentance we discover in all who have been distressed by a sense of sin in themselves, but have been raised from their depression, and reinvigorated by a confidence in the Divine mercy, and converted to the Lord. Hezekiah was terrified when he received the message of death; (*m*) but he wept and prayed, and, contemplating the goodness of God, recovered his former confidence. The Ninevites were confounded by the terrible denunciation of destruction; (*n*) but they covered themselves with sackcloth and ashes, and prayed, in hope that the Lord might be appeased, and the fury of his wrath averted. David confessed that he had committed a great sin in numbering the people; but added, "O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant." (*o*) He acknowledged his crime of adultery at the rebuke of Nathan, and prostrated himself before the Lord; but at the same time cherished an expectation of pardon. (*p*) Such was the repentance of those who felt compunction of heart at the preaching of Peter, but, confiding in the goodness of God, exclaimed, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (*q*) Such also was that of Peter himself, who wept bitterly, but never lost his hope.

V. Though all these observations are true, yet the term *repentance*, as far as I can ascertain from the Scriptures, must have a different acceptation. For to include faith in repentance, is repugnant to what Paul says in the Acts, that he testified "both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (*r*) Where he mentions faith and repentance, as two things totally distinct. What then? can true repentance exist without faith? Not at all. But though they cannot be separated, yet they ought to be distinguished. As faith exists not without hope, and yet there is a difference between them; so repentance and faith, although they are perpetually and indissolubly united, require to be connected rather than confounded. I am well aware, that under the term *repentance* is comprehended a complete conversion to

(*m*) 2 Kings xx. 2. Isaiah xxxviii. 2. (*n*) Jonah iii. 5. (*o*) 2 Sam. xxiv. 10.
 (*p*) Ibid. xii. 13. → 16. (*q*) Acts ii. 37. (*r*) Ibid. xx. 21.

God, of which faith is one of the principal branches; but in what sense, will best appear from an explication of its nature and properties. The Hebrew word for repentance, denotes conversion or return. The Greek word signifies change of mind or intention. Repentance itself corresponds very well with both etymologies, for it comprehends these two things; that forsaking ourselves, we should turn to God, and laying aside our old mind, should assume a new one. Wherefore I conceive it may be justly defined to be "*a true conversion of our life to God, proceeding from a sincere and serious fear of God, and consisting in the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification of the spirit.*" In this sense we must understand all the addresses, in which either the prophets in ancient days, or the apostles in a succeeding age, exhorted their contemporaries to repentance. For the point to which they endeavoured to bring them was this, that being confounded by their sins, and penetrated with a fear of the Divine judgment, they might prostrate themselves in humility before him against whom they had offended, and with true penitence return into his right way. Therefore these expressions, "*to repent,*" (s) and "*to return to the Lord,*" (t) are promiscuously used by them in the same signification. Hence also the sacred history expresses repentance by *seeking after*, and *following God*, when men who have disregarded him and indulged their criminal propensities, begin to obey his word, and are ready to follow whithersoever he calls them. And John and Paul have spoken of "bringing forth fruits meet for repentance," to signify a life which, in every action, will discover and testify such a repentance.

VI. But before we proceed any farther, it will be useful to amplify and explain the definition we have given; in which there are three points to be particularly considered. In the first place, when we call repentance "*a conversion of the life to God,*" we require a transformation, not only in the external actions, but in the soul itself: which, after having put off its old nature, should produce the fruits of actions corresponding to its renovation. The prophet, intending to express this idea, commands those whom he calls to repentance, to make themselves a new

(s) Matt. iii. 2.

(t) 1 Sam. vii. 3.

heart. (u) Wherefore Moses, when about to shew how the Israelites might repent and be rightly converted to the Lord, frequently teaches them that it must be done with all their heart, and with all their soul; and by speaking of the circumcision of the heart, he enters into the inmost affections of the mind. This mode of expression we find often repeated by the prophets; but there is no passage from which we may obtain clearer ideas of the true nature of repentance, than from the language of God in the fourth chapter of Jeremiah: "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me. Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart." (w) Observe how he denounces that they shall labour in vain in the pursuit of righteousness, unless impiety be previously eradicated from the bottom of their hearts. And, in order to make a deeper impression upon them, he apprises them that they have to do with God, with whom subterfuges are of no avail, because he abhors all duplicity of heart. For this reason, Isaiah ridicules the preposterous endeavours of hypocrites, who did indeed strenuously attempt an external repentance by the observance of ceremonies, but at the same time were not concerned "to loose the bands of wickedness," (x) with which they oppressed the poor. In that passage he also beautifully shews, in what duties unfeigned repentance properly consists.

VII. In the second place, we represented repentance as proceeding from a serious fear of God. For before the mind of a sinner can be inclined to repentance, it must be excited by a knowledge of the Divine judgment. But when this thought has once been deeply impressed, that God will one day ascend his tribunal to exact an account of all words and actions, it will not permit the miserable man to take any interval of rest, or to enjoy even a momentary respite, but perpetually stimulates him to adopt a new course of life, that he may be able to appear with security at that judgment. Wherefore the Scripture, when it exhorts to repentance, frequently introduces a mention of the judgment; as in Jeremiah; "Lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your

(u) Ezekiel xviii. 31.

(w) Jer. iv. 1, 3, 4.

(x) Isaiah lviii. 6.

doings:" (y) in the address of Paul to the Athenians; "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness:" (z) and in many other places. Sometimes, by the punishments already inflicted, it declares that God is a judge; in order that sinners may consider with themselves that worse calamities await them, unless they speedily repent. We have an example of this in the twenty-ninth chapter of Deuteronomy. But since conversion commences with a dread and hatred of sin, therefore the apostle makes godly sorrow the cause of repentance. (a) He calls it godly sorrow, when we not only dread punishment, but hate and abhor sin itself, from a knowledge that it is displeasing to God. Nor ought this to be thought strange; for unless we felt sharp compunction, our carnal sluggishness could never be corrected, and even these distresses of mind would not be sufficient to arouse it from its stupidity and indolence, if God, by the infliction of his chastisements, did not make a deeper impression. Beside this, there is a rebellious obstinacy, which requires violent blows as it were to overcome it. The severity therefore which God uses in his threatenings, is extorted from him by the depravity of our minds; since it would be in vain for him to address kind and alluring invitations to those who are asleep. I forbear to recite the testimonies with which the Scripture abounds. The fear of God is called the beginning of repentance also for another reason; because though a man's life were perfect in every virtue, if it be not devoted to the worship of God, it may indeed be commended by the world, but in heaven it will be only an abomination; since the principal branch of righteousness consists in rendering to God the honour due to him, of which he is impiously defrauded, when it is not our end and aim to submit ourselves to his government.

VIII. It remains for us, in the third place, to explain our position, that repentance consists of two parts: the mortification of the flesh, and the vivification of the spirit. This is clearly expressed by the prophets, although in a simple and homely

(y) Jer. iv. 4.

(z) Acts xvii. 30, 31.

(a) 2 Cor. vii. 10.

manner, according to the capacity of a carnal people, when they say, "Depart from evil, and do good." (b) Again, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed, &c." (c) For when they call men from the paths of wickedness, they require the total destruction of the flesh, which is full of wickedness and perverseness. It is a thing truly difficult and arduous, to put off ourselves, and to depart from the native bias of our minds. Nor must the flesh be considered as entirely dead, unless all that we have of ourselves be destroyed. But since the universal disposition of the flesh is secret "enmity against God," (d) the first step to an obedience of the law is this renunciation of our own nature. They afterwards designate the renovation by its fruits, righteousness, judgment, and mercy. For a punctual performance of these external duties would not be sufficient, unless the mind and heart had previously acquired a disposition of righteousness, judgment, and mercy. This takes place when the Spirit of God hath tintured our souls with his holiness, and given them such new thoughts and affections, that they may be justly considered as new, or altogether different from what they were before. And certainly, as we have a natural aversion to God, we shall never aim at that which is right, without a previous renunciation of ourselves. Therefore we are so frequently commanded to put off the old man, to renounce the world and the flesh, to forsake our lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of our mind. Besides, the very word *mortification* reminds us how difficult it is to forget our former nature; for it implies that we cannot be formed to the fear of God, and learn the rudiments of piety, without being violently slain and annihilated by the sword of the Spirit. As though God had pronounced that, in order to our being numbered among his children, there is a necessity for the destruction of our common nature.

IX. Both these branches of repentance are effects of our participation of Christ. For if we truly partake of his death, our old man is crucified by its power, and the body of sin expires, so that the corruption of our former nature loses all its vigour. (e)

(b) Psalm xxxiv. 14. (c) Isaiah i. 16, 17. (d) Rom. viii. 7. (e) Rom. vi. 5, 6.

If we are partakers of his resurrection, we are raised by it to a newness of life, which corresponds with the righteousness of God. In one word, I apprehend repentance to be regeneration, the end of which is the restoration of the Divine image within us; which was defaced, and almost obliterated, by the transgression of Adam. Thus the apostle teaches us, when he says, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (*f*) Again, "Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (*g*) Again, in another place, "And ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." (*h*) Wherefore in this regeneration we are restored by the grace of Christ to the righteousness of God, from which we fell in Adam; in which manner the Lord is pleased completely to restore all those whom he adopts to the inheritance of life. And this restoration is not accomplished in a single moment, or day, or year; but by continual, and sometimes even tardy advances, the Lord destroys the carnal corruptions of his chosen, purifies them from all pollution, and consecrates them as temples to himself; renewing all their senses to real purity, that they may employ their whole life in the exercise of repentance, and know that this warfare will be terminated only by death. And so much the greater is the wickedness of that impure and quarrelsome apostate Staphylus, who idly pretends that I confound the state of the present life with the glory of heaven, when I explain the image of God, according to Paul, to be righteousness and true holiness. As if indeed, when any thing is to be defined, we are not to inquire after the completeness and perfection of it. It is not denied that there is room for farther advances; but I assert, that as far as any man approaches to a resemblance of God, so far the image of God is displayed in him. That believers may attain to this, God assigns them the race of repentance to run during their whole life.

X. Thus, therefore, the children of God are liberated by re-

(*f*) 2 Cor. iii. 18.

(*g*) Eph. iv. 23, 24.

(*h*) Col. iii. 10.

generation from the servitude of sin; not that they have already obtained the full possession of liberty, and experience no more trouble from the flesh, but there remains in them a perpetual cause of contention to exercise them; and not only to exercise them, but also to make them better acquainted with their own infirmity. And on this subject all sound writers are agreed; that there still remains in a regenerate man a fountain of evil, continually producing irregular desires, which allure and stimulate him to the commission of sin. They acknowledge also, that saints are still so afflicted with the disease of concupiscence, that they cannot prevent their being frequently stimulated and incited either to lust, or to avarice, or to ambition, or to other vices. There is no need of a laborious investigation, to learn what were the sentiments of the Fathers on this subject: it will be sufficient to consult Augustine alone, who with great diligence and fidelity has collected the opinions of them all. From him then the reader may receive all the certainty he can desire concerning the sense of antiquity. Between him and us, this difference may be discovered; that while he concedes that believers, as long as they inhabit a mortal body, are so bound by concupiscence that they cannot but feel irregular desires, yet he ventures not to call this disease by the name of *sin*, but, content with designating it by the appellation of infirmity, teaches that it only becomes sin in cases where either action or consent is added to the conception or apprehension of the mind, that is, where the will yields to the first impulse of appetite. But we, on the contrary, deem it to be sin, whenever a man feels any evil desires contrary to the Divine law; and we also assert the depravity itself to be sin, which produces these desires in our minds. We maintain, therefore, that sin always exists in the saints, till they are divested of the mortal body; because their flesh is the residence of that depravity of concupiscence, which is repugnant to all rectitude. Nevertheless, he has not always refrained from using the word *sin* in this sense; as when he says, "Paul gives the appellation of sin to this, from which all sins proceed, that is, to carnal concupiscence. This, as it respects the saints, loses its kingdom on earth, and has no existence in heaven." In these words he acknowledges that believers are guilty of sin, inasmuch as they are the subjects of carnal concupiscence

XI. But when God is said to "cleanse his church" (i) from all sin, to promise the grace of deliverance in baptism, and to fulfil it in his elect; we refer these phrases rather to the guilt of sin, than to the existence of sin. In the regeneration of his children, God does indeed destroy the kingdom of sin in them (for the Spirit supplies them with strength, which renders them victorious in the conflict); but it only ceases to reign, it continues to dwell in them. Wherefore we say, that "the old man is crucified," (k) that the law of sin is abolished in the children of God, yet so that some reliques remain; not to predominate over them, but to humble them with a consciousness of their infirmity. We grant, indeed, that they are not imputed any more than if they did not exist; but we likewise contend that it is owing to the mercy of God that the saints are delivered from this guilt, who would otherwise be justly accounted sinners and guilty before him. Nor will it be difficult for us to confirm this opinion, since there are clear testimonies of Scripture to support it. What can we desire more explicit than the declaration of Paul to the Romans? (l) In the first place, that he there speaks in the character of a regenerate man, we have already shewn; and Augustine has evinced the same by the strongest arguments. I say nothing of his using the words, *evil* and *sin*. However those who wish to oppose us may cavil at those words, yet who can deny that a resistance to the Divine law is evil? who can deny that an opposition to righteousness is sin? finally, who will not admit that there is guilt, wherever there is spiritual misery? But all these things are affirmed by Paul respecting this disease. Besides, we have a certain demonstration from the law, by which this whole question may be briefly decided. For we are commanded to love God with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our strength. Since all the powers of our soul ought to be thus occupied by the love of God, it is evident that the precept is not fulfilled by those who receive into their hearts the least desire, or admit into their minds any thought, which may draw them aside from the love of God into vanity. What then? are not these properties of the soul,—to be affected with sudden emotions, to apprehend in the sensory, and to form

(i) Eph. v. 26.

(k) Rom. vi. 6.

(l) Rom. vii.

conceptions in the mind? When these, therefore, open a way for the admission of vain and corrupt thoughts, do they not shew that they are so far destitute of the love of God? Whoever, therefore, refuses to acknowledge that all the inordinate desires of the flesh are sins, and that that malady of concupiscence, which they call an incentive to sin, is the source of sin, must necessarily deny the transgression of the law to be sin.

XII. If it be thought absurd, that all the natural appetites of man should be thus universally condemned, since they were implanted by God the author of nature; we reply, that we by no means condemn those desires, which God implanted so deeply in the nature of man at his first creation that they cannot be eradicated from it without destroying humanity itself, but only those insolent and lawless appetites which resist the commands of God. But now since, through the depravity of nature, all its powers are so vitiated and corrupted, that disorder and intemperance are visible in all our actions; because the appetites are inseparable from such excesses, therefore we maintain that they are corrupt. Or if it be wished to have the substance of our opinion in fewer words, we say, that all the desires of men are evil; and we consider them to be sinful, not as they are natural, but because they are inordinate; and we affirm they are inordinate, because nothing pure or immaculate can proceed from a corrupted and polluted nature. Nor does Augustine deviate from this doctrine so much as he appears to do. When he is too much afraid of the odium with which the Pelagians endeavoured to overwhelm him, he sometimes refrains from using the word *sin*: yet when he says, "that the law of sin remains in the saints, and that only the guilt is abolished," he sufficiently indicates that he is not averse to our opinion.

XIII. We will adduce some other passages, from which his sentiments will more fully appear. In his second book against Julian: "This law of sin is both abolished in the spiritual regeneration, and continued in the mortal flesh; abolished, since the guilt is removed in the sacrament, by which believers are regenerated; but continued, because it produces those desires against which also believers contend." Again, "Therefore the law of sin, which was also in the members of so great an apostle, is weakened in baptism, but not finally destroyed." Again,

“The law of sin, the remaining guilt of which is removed in baptism, Ambrose hath called *iniquity*: because it is iniquitous for the flesh to lust against the spirit.” Again, “Sin is dead in that guilt in which it held us; and, although dead, it will rebel till it is cured by the perfection of burial.” In the fifth book, he is still more explicit: “As blindness of heart is both a sin, which consists in a man’s not believing in God; and a punishment for sin, by which a proud heart is deservedly punished; and also a cause of sin, when any is committed through the error of a blind heart: so the concupiscence of the flesh, against which the good spirit lusteth, is both a sin, because it is a disobedience against the government of the mind; and a punishment for sin, because it is inflicted for the demerits of the disobedient; and also a cause of sin, consenting by defection, or produced from contagion.” Here he styles it *sin* without any ambiguity; because, having overthrown error and confirmed the truth, he is not so much afraid of calumnies. As also in the forty-first homily on John, where he undoubtedly speaks the real sentiments of his mind: “If in the flesh you serve the law of sin, do what the apostle himself says, ‘Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.’” (*m*) He says not, let it not exist; but, let it not reign. As long as you live, sin must necessarily exist in your members; let it at least be divested of its kingdom, so that its commands may not be fulfilled.” Those who contend that concupiscence is not sin, commonly object this passage of James, “When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.” (*n*) But this objection is easily repelled; for unless we understand him there to speak of evil works exclusively, or of actual sins, even an evil volition cannot be accounted sin. But from his calling flagitious and criminal actions the offspring of lust, and attributing to them the name of sin, it does not necessarily follow that concupiscence is not an evil thing, and deserving of condemnation in the sight of God.

XIV. Some Anabaptists, in the present age, imagine I know not what frantic intemperance, instead of spiritual regeneration;—that the children of God, being restored to a state of

(*m*) Rom. vi. 12.

(*n*) James i. 15.

innocence, are no longer obliged to be solicitous to restrain the licentiousness of the flesh, but that they ought to follow the leadings of the Spirit, under whose direction it is impossible ever to err. It would be incredible that the mind of man should fall into such madness, did they not publicly and haughtily disseminate this opinion. It is indeed truly prodigious; but it is just and reasonable, that those who have persuaded themselves to pervert the truth of God into a falsehood, should suffer such punishment for their sacrilegious presumption. Must all distinction then of honour and turpitude, justice and injustice, good and evil, virtue and vice, be annihilated? This difference, they say, proceeds from the malediction of the old Adam, from which we are delivered by Christ. Then there will be no difference now between chastity and fornication, sincerity and knavery, truth and falsehood, equity and rapine. Dismiss (they say) all vain fear; the Spirit will command you nothing that is evil, provided you securely and intrepidly resign yourself to his direction. Who is not astonished at these monstrous notions? Yet this is a popular philosophy among those, who, blinded by the violence of their appetites, have discarded common sense. But what kind of a Christ, and what kind of a Spirit, have they fabricated for us? For we acknowledge one Christ and his Spirit alone; whom the prophets have celebrated, whom the Gospel proclaims as revealed, but of whom it gives us no such account as this. That Spirit is not the patron of murder, fornication, drunkenness, pride, contention, avarice, or fraud; but the author of love, chastity, sobriety, modesty, peace, moderation, and truth. He is not a Spirit of fanaticism, rushing precipitately without any consideration through right and wrong; but is full of wisdom and understanding, rightly to discern between justice and injustice. He never instigates to dissolute and unrestrained licentiousness; but, discriminating between what is lawful and what is unlawful, inculcates temperance and moderation. But why should we spend any more labour in refuting this monstrous frenzy? To Christians the Spirit of the Lord is not a turbulent phantom, which they have either spawned themselves in a dream, or received from the invention of others; but they religiously seek the knowledge of him in the Scriptures, where these two things are delivered con-

cerning him: first, that he is given to us in order to our sanctification, to purify us from all our pollutions, and lead us to obey the Divine righteousness; which obedience cannot exist without the subjugation of the appetites to which these men would allow an unlimited license. In the next place, that we are so purified by his sanctification, that we are nevertheless still encompassed with numerous vices and great infirmity, as long as we are burdened with the body. Wherefore, being at a great distance from perfection, it behoves us to make continual advances; and, being entangled in vices, we have need to strive against them every day. Hence also it follows that we ought to shake off all slothful security, and exert the most vigilant attention, lest, without caution, we should be surprised and overcome by the snares of our flesh. Unless we are well assured that we have made a greater progress than the apostle; who, nevertheless, was buffeted by the "messenger of Satan," (o) that his strength might be "made perfect in weakness;" (p) and who faithfully represented the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, which he experienced in his own person.

XV. When the apostle, in a description of repentance, enumerates seven things, which are either causes producing it, or effects proceeding from it, or members and parts of it, he does it for a very good reason. These things are, carefulness, excuse, indignation, fear, vehement desire, zeal, revenge. (q) Nor ought it to be thought strange that I venture not to determine whether they should be considered as causes or effects; for arguments may be adduced in support of both. They may also be styled affections connected with repentance; but as we may discover the meaning of Paul, without discussing these questions, we shall be content with a simple exposition of them. He says then, that godly sorrow produces *solicitude*. For a person who is affected with a serious sense of displeasure, because he has sinned against his God, is at the same time stimulated to diligence and attention, that he may completely extricate himself from the snares of the devil, and be more cautious of his insidious attacks, that he may not in future disobey the government of the Spirit, or be overcome with a careless se-

(o) 2 Cor. xii. 7, 9.

(p) Rom. vii.

(q) 2 Cor. vii. 11

curity. The next thing is *self-excuse*, which in this place signifies not a defence by which a sinner tries to escape the judgment of God, either by denying his transgressions, or extenuating his guilt; but a kind of excuse, consisting rather in deprecation of punishment than in confidence of his cause. Just as children, who are not absolutely lost to all sense of duty, while they acknowledge and confess their faults, at the same time deprecate punishment, and, in order to succeed, testify by every possible method that they have not cast off that reverence which is due to their parents; in a word, they excuse themselves in such a manner, not to prove themselves righteous and innocent, but only to obtain pardon. This is followed by *indignation*, in which the sinner laments within himself, expostulates with himself, and is angry with himself, while he recollects his perverseness and ingratitude to God. The word *fear*, denotes that trepidation with which our minds are penetrated, whenever we reflect upon our demerits, and on the terrible severity of the Divine wrath against sinners. For we cannot but be agitated with an amazing inquietude, which teaches us humility, and renders us more cautious for the future. Now if the solicitude beforementioned be the offspring of fear, we see the connection and coherence between them. He appears to me to have used the word *desire*, to denote diligence in duty and alacrity of obedience, to which the knowledge of our faults ought to be a most powerful stimulus. Similar to this is the meaning of *zeal*, which he immediately subjoins: for it signifies the ardour with which we are inflamed, when we are roused with such thoughts as these: "What have I done? Whither had I precipitated myself, if I had not been succoured by the mercy of God?" The last thing is *revenge*, or punishment; for the greater our severity is towards ourselves, and the stricter inquisition we make concerning our sins, so much the stronger hope ought we to entertain that God will be propitious and merciful. And indeed it is impossible but that a soul, impressed with a dread of the Divine judgment, must inflict some punishment on itself. Truly pious persons experience what punishments are contained in shame, confusion, lamentation, displeasure with themselves, and the other affections which arise from a serious acknowledgment of their transgressions. But let us remember that

some limit must be observed, that we may not be overwhelmed in sorrow; for to nothing are terrified consciences more liable than to fall into despair. And with this artifice also, whomsoever Satan perceives to be dejected by a fear of God, he plunges them farther and farther into the deep gulf of sorrow, that they may never arise again. That fear indeed cannot be excessive, which terminates in humility and departs not from the hope of pardon. Nevertheless, the sinner should always be on his guard, according to the direction of the apostle; (r) lest while he excites his heart to be displeased with himself, he *be wearied* with excessive dread, and *faint in his mind*; for this would drive us away from God, who calls us to himself by repentance. On this subject, Bernard also gives a very useful admonition: "Sorrow for sin is necessary, if it be not perpetual. I advise you sometimes to quit the anxious and painful recollection of your own ways, and to arise to an agreeable and serene remembrance of the Divine blessings. Let us mingle honey with wormwood, that its salutary bitterness may restore our health, when it shall be drunk tempered with a mixture of sweetness; and if you reflect on your own meanness, reflect also on the goodness of the Lord."

XVI. Now it may also be understood what are the fruits of repentance. They are, the duties of piety towards God, and of charity towards men, with sanctity and purity in our whole life. In a word, the more diligently any one examines his life by the rule of the Divine law, so much the more certain evidences he discovers of his repentance. The Spirit therefore, in exhorting us to repentance, frequently calls our attention, sometimes to all the duties of the law, sometimes to the duties of the second table; though in other places, after having condemned impurity in the very fountain of the heart, he proceeds to those external testimonies which evidence a sincere repentance. A view of which I will soon exhibit to the reader, in a description of the Christian life. I shall not collect testimonies from the prophets, in which they partly ridicule the follies of those who attempt to appease God by ceremonies, and demonstrate them to be mere mockeries; and partly inculcate, that external

(r) Heb. xii. 3.

integrity of life is not the principal branch of repentance, because God looks at the heart. He that is but ordinarily acquainted with the Scripture, will discover of himself, without being informed by any one, that in our concerns with God, we advance not a single step unless we begin with the internal affection of the heart. And this passage of Joel will afford us no small assistance in the interpretation of others: "Rend your heart, and not your garments." (s) Both these ideas are briefly expressed in these words of James, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded:" (t) where there is indeed an addition made to the first clause; but the fountain, or original, is next discovered, shewing the necessity of cleansing the secret pollution, that an altar may be erected to God even in the heart. There are likewise some external exercises which we use, in private, as remedies either to humble ourselves, or to subdue our carnality; and in public, to testify our repentance. They proceed from the *revenge* mentioned by Paul: (v) for it is natural to an afflicted mind to continue in a squalid condition, groaning and weeping; to avoid every kind of splendor and pomp, and to forsake all pleasures. He who experiences the great evil of the rebellion of the flesh, seeks every remedy to restrain it. He who properly considers what a grievous thing it is to have offended the justice of God, can enjoy no repose till he has glorified God by his humility. Such exercises are frequently mentioned by the old writers, when they speak of the fruits of repentance. And though they by no means make repentance wholly to consist in them; yet the reader will pardon me if I deliver my opinion, that they appear to me to insist upon them more than they ought. And I hope every one, on a sober examination, will agree with me, that they have gone beyond all due bounds in two respects. For when they so strongly urged and so extravagantly recommended that corporeal discipline, the consequence was indeed that the common people adopted it with great ardour; but they also obscured that which ought to be esteemed of infinitely greater importance. Secondly, in the infliction of castigations, they used rather more rigour than was consistent with ecclesiastical gentleness. But we shall have to treat of this in another place.

(s) Joel ii. 13.

(t) James iv. 8.

(v) 2 Cor. vii. 11.

XVII. But as some persons, when they find weeping, fasting, and ashes mentioned, not only in many other passages of Scripture, but particularly in Joel, (*u*) consider fasting and weeping as the principal part of repentance, their mistake requires to be rectified. What is there said of the conversion of the whole heart to the Lord, and of rending not the garments but the heart, properly belongs to repentance; but weeping and fasting are not added as perpetual or necessary effects of it, but as circumstances belonging to a particular case. Having prophesied that a most grievous destruction was impending over the Jews, he persuades them to prevent the Divine wrath, not only by repentance, but also by exhibiting external demonstrations of sorrow. For as it was customary, in ancient times, for an accused person to present himself in a suppliant posture, with a long beard, dishevelled hair, and mourning apparel, in order to conciliate the compassion of the judge; so it became those who stood as criminals before the tribunal of God, to deprecate his severity in a condition calculated to excite commiseration. Though sackcloth and ashes were perhaps more suitable to those times; yet it is evident that the practice of weeping and fasting would be very seasonable among us, whenever the Lord appears to threaten us with any affliction or calamity. For when he causes danger to appear, he, as it were, denounces that he is prepared and armed for the exercise of vengeance. The prophet therefore was right in exhorting his countrymen to weeping and fasting; that is, to the sadness of persons under accusation, into whose offences he had just before said that an examination was instituted. Neither would the pastors of the church act improperly in the present age, if, when they perceived calamity impending over the heads of their people, they called them to immediate weeping and fasting; provided they always insisted with the greatest fervour and diligence on the principal point, which is, that they must rend their hearts and not their garments. It is certain, that fasting is not always the concomitant of repentance, but is appointed for times of peculiar calamity: wherefore Christ connects it with mourning, when he frees the apostles from any obligation to it, till they should be

(*u*) Joel ii. 12.

affected with grief at the loss of his presence. (w) I speak of solem fasting. For the life of the pious ought at all times to be regulated by frugality and sobriety, that through its whole progress it may appear to be a kind of perpetual fast. But as the whole of this subject must be discussed again, when we come to treat of Ecclesiastical Discipline, I touch the more slightly upon it at present.

XVIII. I will again remark, however, that when the word *repentance* is transferred to this external profession, it is improperly changed from the genuine signification which I have stated. For this external profession is not so much a conversion to God, as a confession of sin, with a deprecation of punishment and guilt. Thus to "repent in sackcloth and ashes," (x) is only a declaration of our displeasure against ourselves, when God is angry with us on account of our grievous offences. And this is a public species of confession, by which condemning ourselves before angels and men, we prevent the judgment of God. For Paul rebukes the sluggishness of those who indulge their sins, saying, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." (y) It is not necessary, in all cases, publicly to make men witnesses of our repentance; but a private confession to God is a branch of true penitence which cannot be omitted. For nothing is more unreasonable than that God should pardon sins, in which we encourage ourselves, and which, lest he should bring them to light, we conceal under the garb of hypocrisy. And it is not only necessary to confess the sins which we commit from day to day; more grievous falls ought to lead us farther, and to recal to our remembrance those which appear to have been long buried in oblivion. We learn this from the example of David: (z) for, being ashamed of a recent and flagitious crime, he examines himself back to the time of his conception, and acknowledges that even then he was corrupted and contaminated with carnal impurity; and this not to extenuate his guilt, as many conceal themselves in a multitude, and endeavour to escape with impunity by implicating others with themselves. Very different was the conduct of David, who ingenuously aggravated his guilt, by confessing

(w) Matt. ix. 15. (x) Ibid. xi. 21. (y) 1 Cor. xi. 31. (z) Psalm li. 5.

that he was corrupted from his earliest infancy, and had never ceased to accumulate crimes upon crimes. In another place, also, he enters on such an examination of his past life, that he implores the Divine mercy to pardon the sins of his youth. (a) And certainly we shall never give proof that we have shaken off our lethargy, till, groaning under the burden, and bewailing our misery, we pray to God for relief. It is farther to be remarked, that the repentance which we are commanded constantly to practise, differs from that which arouses as it were from death those who have either fallen into some great enormity, or abandoned themselves to a course of sin with unrestrained license, or by any rebellion shaken off the Divine yoke. For when the Scripture exhorts to repentance, it frequently signifies a kind of transition and resurrection from death to life; and when it states that the people repented, it means that they departed from idolatry and other gross enormities. In which sense Paul declares his grief for sinners, who "have not repented of their uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness." (b) This difference should be carefully observed, lest, when we hear that few are called to repentance, we fall into a supine security, as though we had no more to do with the mortification of the flesh, from which the depraved appetites that perpetually disturb us, and the vices that often arise in us, will never permit us to relax. The special repentance, therefore, which is only required of some whom the devil has seduced from the fear of God, and entangled in his fatal snares, supersedes not that ordinary repentance, which the corruption of nature obliges us to practise during the whole course of our lives.

XIX. Now if it be true, as it certainly is, that the whole substance of the Gospel is comprised in these two points, repentance and remission of sins; do not we perceive that the Lord freely justifies his children, that he may also restore them to true righteousness by the sanctification of his Spirit? John, the "messenger sent before the face" of Christ to "prepare his way before him," (c) preached, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (d) By calling men to repent-

(a) Psalm xxv. 7. (b) 2 Cor. xii. 21. (c) Matt. xi. 10. (d) Ibid. iii. 2.

ance, he taught them to acknowledge themselves to be sinners, and every thing belonging to them to be condemned before God, that they might earnestly desire and pray for a mortification of the flesh, and new regeneration in the Spirit. By announcing the kingdom of God, he called them to exercise faith; for by "the kingdom of God," the approach of which he proclaimed, he intended remission of sins, salvation, life, and in general all the benefits that we obtain in Christ. Wherefore, in the other evangelists, it is said, that "John came, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." (*e*) What was intended by this, but that, oppressed and wearied with the burden of sins, men should turn themselves to the Lord, and entertain a hope of remission and salvation? Thus, also, Christ commenced his public ministrations. "The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel." (*f*) First, he declares that the treasures of mercy are opened in himself; then he requires repentance; and lastly, a reliance on the Divine promises. Therefore, when he would give a brief summary of the whole Gospel, he said, that "it behoved him to suffer, and to rise from the dead; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name." (*g*) The apostles also, after his resurrection, preached that he was exalted by God, "to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins." (*h*) Repentance is preached in the name of Christ, when men are informed by the doctrine of the Gospel that all their thoughts, their affections, and their pursuits, are corrupt and vicious; and that therefore it is necessary for them to be born again, if they wish to enter the kingdom of God. Remission of sins is preached, when men are taught that Christ is made unto them "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" (*i*) in whose name they are gratuitously accounted righteous and innocent in the sight of God. Both these blessings of grace, as we have already shewn, are apprehended by faith; yet since the goodness of God in the remission of sins is the peculiar object of faith, it was necessary that it should be carefully distinguished from repentance.

XX. Now as a hatred of sin, which is the commencement of

(*e*) Luke iii. 3. Mark i. 4.

(*h*) Acts v. 31.

(*f*) Mark i. 15.

(*i*) 1 Cor. i. 30.

(*g*) Luke xxiv. 46, 47.

repentance, is our first introduction to the knowledge of Christ, who reveals himself to none but miserable and distressed sinners, who mourn, and labour, and are heavy laden; who hunger and thirst, and are pining away with grief and misery: (*k*) so it is necessary for us, if we desire to abide in Christ, to strive for this repentance, to devote our whole lives to it, and to pursue it to the last. For he “came to call sinners,” but it was to call them “to repentance.” (*l*) He was “sent to bless” the unworthy; but it was “in turning away every one from his iniquities.” (*m*) The Scripture is full of such expressions. Wherefore, when God offers remission of sins, he generally requires repentance on the part of the sinner; implying that his mercy ought to furnish a motive to excite us to repentance. “Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near.” (*n*) Again; “The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob.” (*o*) Again; “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him.” (*p*) Again; “Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” (*q*) Here it must be remarked, however, that this condition is not annexed in such a manner, as though our repentance were the fundamental and meritorious cause of pardon; but rather because the Lord hath determined to have mercy upon men, in order that they may repent, he informs them what course they must take if they wish to obtain his favour. Therefore, as long as we inhabit the prison of our body, we shall have to maintain an incessant conflict with the vices of our corrupt nature, and even with our natural soul. Plato sometimes says, that the life of a philosopher is a meditation of death. We may assert, with more truth, that the life of a Christian is perpetually employed in the mortification of the flesh, till it is utterly destroyed, and the Spirit of God obtains the sole empire within us. Wherefore I think that he has made a very considerable proficiency, who has learned to be exceedingly displeased with himself: not that he should remain in this distress, and advance no farther, but rather hasten and

(*k*) Isaiah lxi. 1. Matt. xi. 5. Luke iv. 18. (*l*) Matt. ix. 13. (*m*) Acts iii. 26.

(*n*) Isaiah lvi. 1. (*o*) Ibid. lix. 20. (*p*) Ibid. lv. 6, 7. (*q*) Acts iii. 19.

aspire towards God; that being engrafted into the death and life of Christ, he may make repentance the object of his constant meditation and pursuit. And this cannot but be the conduct of those who feel a genuine hatred of sin; for no man ever hated sin, without having been previously captivated with the love of righteousness. This doctrine, as it is the most simple of all, so also it appears to me to be most consistent with the truth of the Scripture.

XXI. That repentance is a peculiar gift of God, must, I think, be so evident from the doctrine just stated, as to preclude the necessity of a long discourse to prove it. Therefore the Church praises and admires the goodness of God, that he "hath granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life:" (r) and Paul, when he enjoins Timothy to be patient and gentle towards unbelievers, says, "If God, peradventure, will give them repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil." (s) God affirms, indeed, that he wills the conversion of all men, and directs his exhortations promiscuously to all; but the efficacy of these exhortations depends on the Spirit of regeneration. For it were more easy to create new men, than by our own power to endue ourselves with a more excellent nature. Therefore, in the whole course of regeneration, we are justly styled God's "workmanship, created unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (t) Whomsoever God chooses to rescue from destruction, them he vivifies by the Spirit of regeneration; not that repentance is properly the cause of faith, but because, as we have already seen, it is inseparable from faith and the mercy of God; since, according to the testimony of Isaiah, "the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob." (u) It remains an unshaken truth, that wherever the fear of God prevails in the heart, the Spirit has operated to the salvation of that individual. Therefore, in Isaiah, where believers are bewailing and deploring their being deserted by God, they mention this as a sign of reprobation, that their hearts are hardened by him. (w) The apostle also, intending to exclude apostates from all hope of salvation, as-

(r) Acts xi. 18.

(s) 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26.

(t) Eph. ii. 10.

(u) Isaiah lix. 20.

(w) Ibid. lxiii. 17.

serts, as a reason, that "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance;" (x) because God, in the renewal of those whom he will not suffer to perish, discovers an evidence of his paternal favour, and attracts them to himself with the radiance of his serene and joyful countenance; whilst, on the contrary, he displays his wrath in hardening the reprobate, whose impiety is never to be forgiven. (y) This kind of vengeance the apostle denounces against wilful apostates, who, when they depart from the faith of the Gospel, deride God, contumeliously reject his grace, profane and trample on the blood of Christ, and do all in their power to crucify him again. For he does not, as is pretended by some preposterously severe persons, preclude all voluntary sinners from a hope of pardon. His design is to shew that apostacy is unworthy of every excuse, and therefore it is not strange that God punishes such a sacrilegious contempt of himself with inexorable rigour. "For it is impossible (he tells us) for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." (z) Again; "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment." (a) These are the passages, from a misinterpretation of which the Novatians formerly derived a pretence for their extravagant opinions; and the apparent harshness of which has offended some good men, and induced them to believe that this epistle is supposititious, though every part of it contains unequivocal evidences of the apostolic spirit. But as we are contending only with those who receive it, it is easy to shew that these passages afford not the least countenance to their error. In the first place, the apostle must necessarily be in unison with his Master, who affirms that "all sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall not be forgiven neither in this world neither in the world to

(x) Heb. vi. 4. (y) Ibid. x. 29. (z) Ibid. vi. 4—6. (a) Heb. x. 26, 27.

come.”(b) The apostle, I say, must certainly have been content with this exception, unless we wish to make him an enemy to the grace of Christ. Whence it follows, that pardon is denied to no particular sins, except one, which proceeds from desperate fury, and cannot be attributed to infirmity, but clearly proves a man to be possessed by the devil.

XXII. But, for the farther elucidation of this subject, it is necessary to inquire into the nature of that dreadful crime which will obtain no forgiveness. Augustine somewhere defines it to be an obstinate perverseness, attended with a despair of pardon, and continued till death; but this is not consistent with the language of Christ, that “it shall not be forgiven in this world.” For either this is a vain assertion, or the sin may be committed in this life. But if the definition of Augustine be right, it is never committed unless it continue till death. Others say, that a man sins against the Holy Ghost, who envies the grace bestowed on his brother; I know no foundation for this notion. But we will adduce the true definition; which, when it shall have been proved by strong testimonies, will of itself easily overturn all others. I say then, that the sin against the Holy Ghost is committed by those who, though they are so overpowered with the splendour of Divine truth that they cannot pretend ignorance, nevertheless resist it with determined malice, merely for the sake of resisting it. For Christ, in explanation of what he had asserted, immediately subjoins, “Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him.”(c) And Matthew, instead of “blasphemy against the Spirit,” says, “blasphemy of the Spirit.”* How can any one cast a reproach on the Son, that is not also directed against the Spirit? Those who unadvisedly offend against the truth of God, which they know not, and who ignorantly revile Christ, but at the same time have such a disposition that they would not extinguish the Divine truth if revealed to them, or utter one injurious word against him whom they knew to be the Lord’s Christ; they sin against the Father and the Son. Thus there are many in the present day

(b) Matt. xii. 31, 32. Mark iii. 28, 29. Luke xii. 10. (c) Matt. xii. 32.

* του πνιματος βλασφημια, Matt. xii. 31.

who most inveterately execrate the doctrines of the Gospel, which if they knew to be the evangelical doctrine, they would be ready to venerate with their whole heart. But those who are convinced in their conscience, that it is the word of God which they reject and oppose, and yet continue their opposition; they are said to blaspheme against the Spirit, because they strive against the illumination which is the work of the Holy Spirit. Such were some among the Jews, who, when they were not able to resist the Spirit (*d*) that spake by Stephen, yet obstinately strove to resist. Many of them were undoubtedly urged to this conduct by a zeal for the law; but it appears that there were others who were infuriated by a malignant impiety against God himself, that is, against the doctrine which they knew to be from God. Such also were the Pharisees, whom the Lord rebuked; who, in order to counteract the influence of the Holy Spirit, slanderously ascribed it to the power of Beelzebub. (*e*) This then is "blasphemy of the Spirit," where the presumption of man deliberately strives to annihilate the glory of God. This is implied in the observation of Paul, that he "obtained mercy, because" he had "ignorantly in unbelief" committed those crimes, the demerits of which would otherwise have excluded him from the grace of the Lord. (*f*) If the union of ignorance and unbelief was the reason of his obtaining pardon, it follows that there is no room for pardon where unbelief has been attended with knowledge.

XXIII. But, on a careful observation, you will perceive that the apostle speaks not of one or more particular falls, but of the universal defection, by which the reprobate exclude themselves from salvation. We need not wonder that those whom John, in his canonical epistle, affirms not to have been of the number of the elect from whom they departed, experience God to be implacable towards them. (*g*) For he directs his discourse against those who imagined that they might return to the Christian religion, although they had once apostatized from it; to whom he contradicts this false and pernicious notion, declaring, what is absolutely true, that it is impossible for persons to return to the communion of Christ, who have knowingly and willfully reject-

(*d*) Acts vi. 10.

(*e*) Matt. ix. 34.—xii. 24.

(*f*) 1 Tim. i. 13.

(*g*) 1 John ii. 19.

ed it. And it is rejected, not by those who simply transgress the word of the Lord by a dissolute and licentious life, but by those who professedly renounce all his doctrines. Therefore the fallacy lies in the terms *falling away* and *sinning*; for the Novatians explain *falling away* to take place, when any one, after having been instructed by the law of the Lord that theft and fornication ought not to be committed, yet abstains not from either of these sins. But, on the contrary, I affirm that there is a tacit antithesis understood, which ought to contain a repetition of all the opposites of the things which had been previously mentioned; so that this passage expresses not any particular vice, but an universal defection from God, and, if I may use the expression, an apostacy of the whole man. When he speaks, therefore, of some who fell away, "after they were once enlightened, and had tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and the powers of the world to come;" (h) it must be understood of persons who, with deliberate impiety, have smothered the light of the Spirit, rejected the taste of the heavenly gift, alienated themselves from the sanctification of the Spirit, and trampled on the word of God and the powers of the world to come. And the more fully to express that decided determination of impiety, he afterwards, in another place, adds the word *wilfully*. For when he says, that "if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice," (i) he denies not that Christ is a perpetual sacrifice to expiate the iniquities of the saints, which almost the whole epistle expressly proclaims in describing the priesthood of Christ, but intends that there remaineth no other where that is rejected. But it is rejected, when the truth of the Gospel is avowedly renounced.

XXIV. The objection of some, who conceive it to be severe and inconsistent with the Divine clemency, that pardon should be refused to any who flee to the Lord imploring his mercy, is easily answered. For he affirms not that pardon is denied to them if they turn themselves to the Lord; but he absolutely denies the possibility of their attaining to repentance, because they are stricken with eternal blindness by the righteous judgment

(h) Heb. vi. 4—6.

(i) Ibid. x. 26.

of God, on account of their ingratitude. Nor is it any objection that the same apostle afterwards accommodates to this subject the example of Esau, who vainly endeavoured with weeping and lamentation to recover his lost rights of primogeniture. Nor that the prophet utters this denunciation; "though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them." (*k*) For such forms of expression signify, neither true conversion nor invocation of God, but the anxiety felt by the impious in extreme calamity, which constrains them to consider, what before they securely disregarded, that nothing can do them any good but the assistance of the Lord. And this they do not so much implore, as bewail its being withheld from them. Therefore the prophet intends by *crying*, and the apostle by *weeping*, only that horrible torment which excruciates the impious with the agonies of despair. This requires to be carefully observed, because otherwise this procedure of God would contradict his proclamation by the mouth of the prophet, that as soon as the sinner shall have turned, he will be propitious to him. (*l*) And, as I have already remarked, it is certain that the human mind is not changed for the better, except by the previous influence of his grace. Nor will his promise respecting those who call upon him, ever deceive; but it is improper to apply the terms, *conversion* and *prayer*, to that blind torment by which the reprobate are distracted, when they see that it is necessary for them to seek God in order to find a remedy for their miseries, while at the same time they continue to flee from his approach.

XXV. But it is inquired, since the apostle denies that God is appeased by a hypocritical repentance, how Ahab obtained pardon, and averted the punishment with which he had been threatened, though he appears, from the subsequent tenour of his life, to have been only terrified by a sudden consternation? He clothed himself with sackcloth, sprinkled ashes upon his head, lay on the ground, and, as it is declared concerning him, "humbled himself before God;" (*m*) but it was nothing, to rend his garments, while his heart remained perverse and inflated with wickedness. Yet we see how God is inclined to clemency. I reply, that sometimes hypocrites are thus spared for a sea-

(*k*) Jer. xi. 11.(*l*) Ezek. xviii. 21.(*m*) 1 Kings xxi. 27, &c.

son, yet that the wrath of God always abides upon them, and that this is done not so much for their sakes, as for a public example. For what benefit did Ahab receive from the mitigation of the threatened punishment, but a respite from it during his continuance in this world? The malediction of God therefore, although concealed, fixed itself in his family, and he himself went forward to eternal perdition. The same may be observed in the case of Esau; for though he suffered a repulse, yet a temporal benediction was granted to his tears. (n) But since the spiritual inheritance, according to the oracle of God, could remain only with one of the brothers, when Jacob was chosen and Esau rejected, that preterition shut out the Divine mercy: yet this consolation was left to him as to a man on a level with the brutes, that he should be enriched with "the fatness of the earth and the dew of heaven." This is what I have just observed ought to be considered as an example to others, that we may learn to devote our minds and our exertions with more alacrity to sincere repentance; because it is not to be doubted that those who are truly and cordially converted will find God readily disposed to forgiveness, whose clemency extends itself even to the unworthy, as long as they manifest any appearance of contrition. At the same time, also, we are taught what dreadful vengeance awaits all the obstinate, who, with impudent countenances and hardened hearts, despise, disregard, and ridicule the Divine threatenings. Thus he frequently extended his hand to the children of Israel, to alleviate their distresses, notwithstanding their supplications were hypocritical, and their hearts full of duplicity and perfidy; as he complains in one of the Psalms, (o) that they immediately after returned to their former courses. He designed by his merciful kindness, either to bring them to a serious conversion, or to render them inexcusable. Yet, by the temporary remission of punishments, he imposes on himself no perpetual law, but sometimes arises against hypocrites with the greater severity, and enhances their punishments, to manifest his extreme displeasure against hypocrisy. But he exhibits, as I have observed,

(n) Gen. xxvii. 38, 39.

(o) Psalm lxxviii. 36, 37.

some examples of his readiness to pardon, in order to animate the pious to a correction of their lives, and the more severely to condemn the pride of those who obstinately kick against the goads.

CHAPTER IV.

The Sophistry and Jargon of the Schools concerning Repentance, very remote from the Purity of the Gospel. On Confession and Satisfaction.

I COME now to the discussion of those things which have been advanced by the sophists of the schools concerning Repentance, which I shall run over as briefly as possible: for it is not my design to pursue the subject at large, lest this book, which I am endeavouring to make a compendium of doctrine, should be drawn out to an immoderate extent. They have involved a subject, otherwise not very intricate, in so many perplexities, that those who have entered but a little way into their labyrinths will not find it easy to extricate themselves. In the first place, the definition they have given of repentance, clearly shews that they never understood what it was: for they catch at some passages in the writings of the Fathers, which by no means express the nature of repentance; as, that “to repent is to weep for sins previously committed, not to commit sins to be wept for.” Again, “that it is to lament evils that are past, not to commit new ones to be lamented.” Again, “that it is a kind of mournful vengeance, punishing in ourselves what we bewail having committed.” Again, “that it is a sorrow of heart and bitterness of soul on account of the evils which a man has committed, or to which he has consented.” But though we concede that these expressions were properly used by the Fathers, which, however, a contentious man would find no difficulty in denying; yet they were used not with a view to describe repentance, but only to exhort their readers to avoid relapsing into those crimes from which they had been delivered. But if we are disposed to convert all observations of this kind into definitions, others may be added with equal propriety. As

this of Chrysostom, "Repentance is a medicine which destroys sin, a gift bestowed from heaven, an admirable virtue, a grace exceeding the power of laws." Moreover, the doctrine which they afterwards advance is still worse than these definitions: for they are so obstinately riveted to external exercises, that one can collect nothing else from immense volumes, but that repentance is an austere discipline, which serves partly to subdue the flesh, partly to chastise and punish vices; but concerning the internal renovation of the mind, which is attended with a real reformation of the life, they observe a wonderful silence. Of contrition and attrition indeed they treat largely; they torment souls with a multitude of scruples, and drive them to extreme trouble and anxiety; but when they appear to have thoroughly wounded the heart, they heal all the bitterness by a slight sprinkling of ceremonies. Having thus quaintly defined repentance, they divide it into contrition of heart, confession of mouth, and satisfaction of work; a division which is no more agreeable to the rules of logic than their definition, though they would be thought to have spent their whole lives in composing syllogisms. But should any one reason from the definition (which is a kind of argumentation common among logicians) that a man may weep for sins previously committed, and commit no more to be wept for; may lament evils that are past, and commit no more to be lamented; may punish what he mourns that he has committed, &c. although he makes no confession with his mouth; how will they defend their division? For if he who confesses not, be nevertheless truly penitent, repentance may exist where there is no confession. But if they reply that this division refers to repentance as a sacrament, or is to be understood of the complete perfection of repentance, which they comprehend not in their definition, they have no reason to accuse me; let them impute the blame to themselves, for not giving definitions with more correctness and perspicuity. For myself, indeed, according to my dull capacity, in all controversies I refer every thing to the definition, which is the hinge and foundation of the whole argument. But, admitting this to be their magisterial license, we proceed to an attentive examination of the parts themselves in order. When I neglect, and pass over as frivolous, things which with supercilious

gravity they represent as mysteries, I never do it without design; not that I should find it very laborious to canvass the arguments in which they conceive themselves to have discovered most shrewdness and subtilty; but I could not conscientiously fatigue my readers with such impertinencies to no good purpose. From the questions which they raise and agitate, and with which they miserably embarrass themselves, it is easy to see, that they talk of subjects of which they are utterly ignorant. Such as this; Whether repentance for one sin be pleasing to God during an obstinate continuance in others. Again, Whether punishments inflicted by God be available for satisfaction. Again, Whether repentance may be frequently repeated for mortal sins. On this point they shamefully and impiously determine, that repentance is daily practised only for venial sins. They also torment themselves much with a gross error, in an expression of Jerome, "That repentance is a second plank after a shipwreck;" thus giving proof, that they have never been awakened from their brutish stupidity, so as to have even the most distant view of the thousandth part of their sins.

II. I wish the reader to consider, that this is not a contention about an insignificant trifle, but a question respecting the most serious of all subjects, remission of sins. For by requiring in repentance, compunction of heart, confession of mouth, and satisfaction of work, they maintain, that these three things are necessary to procure the remission of sins. But if it be important for us to know any thing in the whole science of religion, it is certainly of the greatest importance to apprehend, and fully to understand, by what means, by what law, on what condition, and with what facility or difficulty, remission of sins may be obtained. Unless this knowledge be clear and certain, the conscience can have no rest, no peace with God, no confidence or security; but is the subject of perpetual trepidations and fluctuations, is disturbed, tormented and harassed, and dreads, hates, and avoids the presence of God. But if remission of sins depend on those conditions to which they confine it, we are in a most miserable and deplorable situation. They make contrition the first step towards obtaining pardon, and require such as is due from us, that is, such as is just and perfect; but they have not determined, when a man may be as-

sured that he has arrived at this degree of perfect contrition. I grant, indeed, that every man ought to be sedulously and earnestly urged, that by bitterly mourning for his sins, he may continually augment his displeasure and hatred against them. For this "sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of." (*p*) But when such an anguish of sorrow is required as may correspond to the magnitude of the guilt, and may be weighed in the balance with confidence of pardon, then the wretched conscience is wonderfully tormented and agitated, when it sees a due contrition for sins imposed on it, and understands not the extent of the debt so as to be able to decide with itself that it has discharged what was due from it. If they say that we must do what we can, we still return to the same point: for, when will any man presume to flatter himself that he has exerted all his power in bewailing his sins? Consciences therefore, that have been long striving with themselves, and exercised in tedious conflicts, but without finding at length any place of rest, endeavour to procure some small alleviation, extorting from themselves some sorrow, and forcing out some tears to complete their contrition.

III. If they charge me with calumny, let them come forth and produce a single individual, who has not, by this doctrine of contrition, either been driven into despair, or endeavoured to avert the Divine judgment by a pretended sorrow instead of real compunction. We have said ourselves, that forgiveness of sins is never enjoyed without repentance, because none but those who are afflicted and wounded with a consciousness of sins, can sincerely implore the mercy of God: but we have likewise added, that repentance is not the cause of remission of sins. But those torments of soul, which they say are duties to be performed, we have put aside. We have taught the sinner not to look on his compunction or on his tears, but to fix both his eyes solely on the mercy of God. We have only declared, that Christ called the labouring and heavy laden, when he was sent "to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, and to comfort all that mourn." (*q*) This would exclude the Pharisees, who, satisfied

(*p*) 2 Cor. vii. 10.

(*q*) Matt. xi. 28. Luke iv. 18. Isaiah lxi. 1, &c.

with their own righteousness, acknowledge not their poverty; and despisers, who, careless of the wrath of God, seek no remedy for their disease: for such neither labour, nor are heavy laden; they are not broken-hearted, or in bondage, or in captivity. But there is a considerable difference, whether a man be taught to merit remission of sins by a true and perfect contrition, (which no sinner can ever perform), or instructed to hunger and thirst for the Divine mercy, that by the knowledge of his misery, by his disquietude, fatigue, and captivity, he may be shewn where he ought to seek for consolation, rest, and liberty, and may learn to glorify God by his humility.

IV. Concerning confession, there has always been a great controversy between the Canonists and the Scholastic divines: the latter contending, that confession is commanded by the word of God; the other, on the contrary, maintaining, that it is enjoined only by the Ecclesiastical constitutions. But this controversy has discovered the singular impudence of the theologians, who have corrupted and violently distorted all the passages of Scripture which they have cited in favour of their argument. And when they perceived that they could not even thus obtain what they desired, those who would appear more shrewd than others, resorted to this subterfuge, that confession, as to the substance of it, came from the Divine law, but afterwards derived its form from a positive law. In a similar manner the most foolish lawyers pretend, that citations originated from the Divine law, because it is said, "Adam, where art thou?" (*r*) and exceptions also, because Adam answered, as if by way of exception, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, &c.:" but that both received their form from the civil code. But let us examine by what arguments they prove this confession, either formal or informal, to have been commanded by God. The Lord, say they, sent leprous persons to the priests. What then? Did he send them to confession? Who ever heard that the Levitical priests were appointed to hear confessions? Therefore they resort to allegories: it was enacted by the Mosaic law, that the priests should distinguish between leprosy and leprosy: sin is a spiritual leprosy; concerning which, it is the office of

the priests to decide. Before I reply to this, I would inquire, by the way, if this passage constitutes them judges of the spiritual leprosy, why do they arrogate to themselves the cognizance of the natural and corporeal leprosy? Is not this trifling with the Scriptures? The law commits to the Levitical priests the cognizance of the leprosy; let us usurp this to ourselves. Sin is a spiritual leprosy; let us also take cognizance of sin. Now I reply: "The priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity, a change also of the law." (*s*) All the priestly functions have been transferred to Christ; in him they are fulfilled and finished; therefore every privilege and honour of the sacerdotal office has been transferred to him alone. If they are so extremely fond of pursuing allegories, let them propose Christ to themselves as the only priest, and accumulate on his tribunal the unlimited jurisdiction over all things; this we shall easily admit. Besides, this allegory of theirs is very absurd, since it places among the ceremonies a law that was merely political. Why then does Christ send leprous persons to the priests? To preclude the priests from calumniating him with a violation of the law, which commanded him that was cured of the leprosy to shew himself to the priest, and to be purged by the oblation of a sacrifice. "Go (said he) shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." (*t*) And truly this miracle was to be a testimony to them; for they had pronounced him leprous, now they pronounce him healed. Are they not, whether willingly or reluctantly, constrained to become witnesses of the miracles of Christ? Christ gives them his miracle for their examination, they cannot deny it; but because they still cavil, this work is a testimony to them. Thus it is said, "This Gospel shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations." (*u*) Again, "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings, for a testimony against them." (*w*) That is, that they may be more powerfully convicted at the judgment of God. But if they would rather coincide with Chrysostom, he also teaches, that Christ did this on account of the Jews, that he might not be deemed a transgressor of the

(*s*) Heb. vii. 12. (*t*) Matt. viii. 4. Luke v. 14.—xvii. 14. Lev. xiv. 2, &c.

(*u*) Matt. xxiv. 14. (*w*) Matt. x. 18.

law. Though on a point so clear I am ashamed to adduce the suffrage of any man; when Christ declares that he leaves the legal rights entirely to the priests, as the professed enemies of the Gospel, who were always ready to cavil, if their mouths were not stopped. Wherefore, the Popish priests, in order to retain this possession, should publicly espouse the party of those, whom it is necessary to restrain by force from uttering their curses against Christ. For with this, which Jesus leaves to the Jewish priests, his true ministers have no concern.

V. Their second argument they derive from the same source, that is, from allegory; as though allegories were sufficient for the confirmation of any dogma. Let them be admitted as sufficient, if I do not prove that those very allegories may be urged by me with more plausibility than they possibly can be them. They plead, therefore, that the Lord commanded his disciples to loose Lazarus from his bandages, when he was raised from the grave. (x) Here, in the first place, they are guilty of falsehood; for it is no where recorded, that the Lord said this to his disciples; and it is much more probable that he said it to the Jews who were standing near him, that the miracle might be rendered more evident beyond all suspicion of fraud, and that his power might appear the greater, from his raising the dead to life without the least touch, solely by the call of his voice. For I apprehend, that the Lord, in order to remove from the minds of the Jews every unfavourable suspicion, chose that they should roll back the stone, should perceive the fetid odour, should see the certain tokens of death, should behold him rising by the sole energy of a word, and be the first to touch him on his restoration to life. And this is the opinion of Chrysostom. But admitting this to have been addressed to the disciples, what will they gain by it? That the Lord gave his apostles the power of loosing; but with how much more aptitude and skill might these words be handled in an allegorical sense, if we should say, that God intended by this emblem to instruct believers, that they ought to loose those whom he hath raised to life; that is, that they should not recal to remembrance the sins which he had forgotten; that they should not condemn as sin-

ners those whom he had absolved; that they should not continue to upbraid with offences which he had forgiven; that where he is merciful and ready to spare, they should not be severe and rigorous to punish? Nothing, surely, ought to be a stronger motive to the exercise of forgiveness by us, than the example of that judge, who threatens to be implacable towards them who are too rigorous and cruel. Let them go now and boast of their allegories.

VI. They come to a closer contest, when they oppose us with what they apprehend to be plain passages. Those who came to the baptism of John confessed their sins; (y) and James directs us to confess our sins one to another. (z) It is no wonder, if those who desired to be baptized confessed their sins, for it is said, that John “preached the baptism of repentance,” and “baptized with water unto repentance.” Whom then should he baptize, but such as confessed themselves sinners? Baptism is an emblem of remission of sins; and who should be admitted to this emblem, but sinners, and those who acknowledged themselves to be such? They confessed their sins therefore, in order to be baptized. Nor is it without reason that James directs us to confess one to another. But if they would observe what immediately follows, they would perceive, that this also affords them very little support. “Confess (says he) your faults one to another, and pray for one another.” He connects mutual confession and mutual prayer. If our confessions must be made only to priests, then our prayers ought to be offered up for them alone. But what if it should follow from the language of James, that priests alone might make confessions? For when he enjoins mutual confession, he addresses such only as have a right to hear the confessions of others. *ἄλλήλοις*, implies mutually, by turns, successively, or reciprocally. But none can reciprocally confess, but those who are qualified to hear confessions. And since they dignify the priests exclusively with this prerogative, we also relinquish to them alone the task of making confession. Then let us dismiss such impertinencies, and attend to the real meaning of the apostle, which is simple and clear: it is, that we should reciprocally communicate our infirmities to each other, to receive from one another mutual advice, mutual compassion, and mutual consolation: and also, that being mutually

conscious of the infirmities of our brethren, we should pray to the Lord on their behalf. Why then do they quote James in opposition to us, who so strongly urge a confession of the Divine mercy? But no man can confess the mercy of God, if he has not previously confessed his own misery. Indeed we rather pronounce an anathema against him who has not confessed himself a sinner, before God, before his angels, before the church, and, in a word, before all mankind. "For the Scripture hath concluded all under sin—that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God;" (a) and that he alone may be justified and exalted.

VII. But I wonder with what face they can presume to contend, that the confession of which they speak is of Divine appointment. The practice we admit to be very ancient, but we can easily prove, that Christians were formerly quite at liberty as to the use of it. That there was no fixed law or constitution respecting it till the time of Innocent III. is certain from the testimony of their own histories. Surely if there had been a more ancient law, they would rather have cited it, than, by being content with a decree of the Council of Lateran, have rendered themselves ridiculous even in the eyes of children. They hesitate not in other cases to fabricate fictitious decrees, which they ascribe to the most ancient councils, that they may dazzle the eyes of the simple by a veneration for antiquity. In this instance they never thought of obtruding such a forgery. Therefore, according to their own testimony, three hundred years have not yet elapsed, since Innocent the Third introduced the snare, and imposed the necessity of confession. But, to say nothing respecting the time, the barbarism of the diction is, of itself, sufficient to deprive that law of all credit. For the good Fathers enjoin, that every person, of both sexes, shall, once in every year, make a particular confession of all sins to the proper priest; but some wits facetiously object, that this precept binds none but hermaphrodites, and relates to no one who is either a male or a female. Moreover, their disciples have betrayed still greater folly, in their inability to explain what is meant by the proper priest. Whatever may be clamorously pretended by all the Pope's mercenary disputants, we are

(a) Gal. iii. 22. Rom. iii. 9, 19.

certain, that Christ was not the author of this law which compels men to enumerate their sins, and that twelve centuries passed away after the resurrection of Christ, before any such law was promulgated: so that this tyranny was not introduced till after the extinction of piety and learning, when visors occupying the place of pastors, had assumed an unlimited license of doing whatever they pleased. There are also plain testimonies, in histories and other ancient writings, which inform us, that this was a political discipline instituted by bishops, not a law given by Christ or his Apostles. Of a great number, I shall produce only one, which will be a clear proof of this assertion. Sozomen, in his Ecclesiastical History, relates, that this ordinance of the bishops was diligently observed in all the Western churches, and especially at Rome. He fully implies that it was not the universal custom of all the churches, and says, that one of the Presbyters was peculiarly appointed to this office. In this, he abundantly confutes the false pretensions of these men, that the keys were given promiscuously, for this use, to the whole sacerdotal order: since it was not the common function of all priests, but the peculiar department of one who was chosen to it by the bishop. This is the same, who, in the present day, in every cathedral church is called the Penitentiary, who takes cognizance of crimes of peculiar enormity, and such as are censured for the sake of example. The historian immediately adds, that this was the custom also at Constantinople, till a certain matron, pretending to go to confession, was discovered to have concealed, under this specious pretext, a criminal connection with the deacon of that church. On account of this crime, Nectarius, the bishop of the church (a man eminent for sanctity and erudition) abolished the ceremony of confession. Here let them erect their asinine ears. If auricular confession had been a law of God, how could Nectarius have presumed to reverse and disannul it? Will they accuse Nectarius of heresy and schism, who is acknowledged by all the Fathers, to have been a holy man of God? But the same sentence would condemn the Constantinopolitan church, in which Sozomen affirms the custom of confession not only to have been discontinued for a season, but to have been altogether disused down to his time. And they would accuse of apostacy, not only the church of Constantinople, but all the

Oriental churches, who neglected a law which they maintain to be inviolable and obligatory on all Christians.

VIII. But this abrogation is plainly attested by Chrysostom, who was himself also a bishop of the church of Constantinople, in so many places, that it is surprising how they dare to open their mouths in contradiction of it. "Confess your sins, (says he,) that you may obliterate them. If you are ashamed to tell any one what sins you have committed, confess them daily in your soul. I say not, that you should confess them to your fellow-servant, who may reproach you; confess them to God, who cures them. Confess your sins on your bed, that there your conscience may daily recognize its crimes." Again, "But now it is not necessary to confess in the presence of witnesses; let an inquisition into your transgressions be the work of your own thoughts, let there be no witness of this judgment; let God alone see you confessing." Again, "I conduct you not into the public view of your fellow-servants; I do not oblige you to reveal your sins to men; lay open your conscience in the presence of God. Shew your wounds to the Lord, who is the best physician, and implore a remedy from him; shew them to him, who upbraideth not, but most mercifully heals." Again, "You certainly should not tell it to a man; lest he reproach you; nor is confession to be made to a fellow-servant, who may publish it: but shew your wounds to the Lord, who exercises his care over you, and is a most merciful physician." He afterwards introduces God speaking thus: "I constrain you not to come forth into the midst of a theatre, and assemble a multitude of witnesses: declare your sin privately to me alone, that I may heal your wound." Shall we say, that Chrysostom proceeded to such a degree of temerity, when he wrote those and similar passages, in order to liberate the consciences of men from obligations imposed on them by the Divine law? Certainly not. But he dares not to require as necessary, what he knows is never prescribed in the word of God.

IX. But to place the whole subject in a more plain and familiar light, we will first faithfully state, what kind of confession is taught in the word of God; and then we will subjoin an account of those inventions of the Papists, not indeed of all, (for who could exhaust that immense ocean?) but only of those

which comprise the substance of their doctrine respecting secret confession. Here it grieves me to mention, how frequently the old translator has translated *confess* instead of *praise*; which is well known even to the most unlearned: only it is necessary to expose their audacity, in transferring to their own tyrannical edict, what was written with reference to the praises of God. To prove the virtue of confession to exhilarate the mind, they produce this passage from the Psalmist, "With the voice of exultation and confession." (b) But, if such a metamorphosis of the passage be admitted, we shall be able to infer any thing from any thing. But since they are thus lost to all sense of shame, let the pious reader remember, that they have been consigned over to a reprobate mind by the righteous vengeance of God, to render their presumption the more detestable. If we are satisfied with the simple doctrine of the Scripture, we shall be in no danger of being deluded by such fallacies: for there one method of confession is prescribed; which is, that since it is the Lord who forgives, forgets, and obliterates sins, we should confess our sins to Him, that we may obtain pardon. He is a physician; to him then let us discover our wounds. He is injured and offended; let us pray to him for peace. He is the seacher of all hearts, and privy to all thoughts; let us hasten to pour out our hearts before him. Finally, it is he who calleth sinners; let us not delay to approach him. David says, "I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (c) Similar to this, is another confession of David: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies." (d) Such also is the confession of Daniel: "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts." (e) and such are the other confessions, which frequently occur in the Scriptures, the recital of which would almost fill a volume. John says, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." (f) To whom must we confess? To him, certainly; and this we do, if we prostrate ourselves before him

(b) Psalm xlii. 4.

(c) Ibid. xxxii. 5.

(d) Ibid. li. 1.

(e) Dan. ix. 5.

(f) 1 John i. 9.

with a distressed and humbled heart; if we sincerely accuse and condemn ourselves in his presence, and pray to be pardoned by his goodness and mercy.

X. Whoever from the heart makes this confession before God, will also, without doubt, have a tongue prepared for confession, as often as it shall be necessary to proclaim the Divine mercy among men; and not only to whisper the secret of his mind once into the ear of an individual, but frequently and publicly, and in the hearing of the whole world, ingenuously to declare, both his own ignominy, and the magnificence and glory of God. In this manner, when David was reproved by Nathan, he felt compunction of conscience, and confessed his sin both to God and to men: "I have sinned (said he) against the Lord:" (*g*) that is, I now make no excuse, nor use the least subterfuge to prevent all men from condemning me as a sinner, and what I wished to conceal from the Lord, from being revealed also to men. The secret confession, therefore, which is made to God, is followed by a voluntary confession before men, whenever it contributes either to the Divine glory or to our humility. For this reason, the Lord anciently enjoined upon the Israelites, that all the people should confess their iniquities publicly in the temple, by the mouth of the priest. (*h*) For he foresaw this assistance to be necessary for them, to bring every person to a proper view of himself. And it is reasonable, that by the confession of our misery, we should glorify the goodness and mercy of God, both among ourselves and before the whole world.

XI. This kind of confession ought to be both ordinary, in the church; and extraordinary, to be practised in a particular manner whenever the people at large are chargeable with the guilt of any common crime. We have an example of the latter, in that solemn confession which was made by all the people under the auspices of Ezra and Nehemiah. For as their long exile, the destruction of their city and temple, and the subversion of their religion, were punishments of the common defection of all, they could not properly acknowledge the blessing of deliverance, unless they had first confessed their guilt. Nor

(*g*) 2 Sam. xii. 13.

(*h*) Lev. xvi. 21.

is it of any importance if, in a congregation, there be sometimes a few innocent persons; for as they are members of a languid and diseased body, they ought not to boast of health. Nor is it possible indeed, but they must contract some of the pollution, and sustain part of the guilt. Therefore, whenever we are afflicted with pestilence, or war, or sterility, or any other calamity, if it be our duty to resort to mourning, to fasting, and other expressions of guilt; confession itself, on which all these other things depend, ought by no means to be neglected. The ordinary confession is not only recommended from the mouth of the Lord, but no judicious man, who has considered its usefulness, will venture to condemn it. For since, in every religious assembly, we introduce ourselves into the presence of God and angels, how shall we commence our services, except by an acknowledgment of our iniquity? But this, you will say, is done in every prayer; for whenever we pray for pardon, we make a confession of our sins. This I acknowledge. But, if you consider our extreme carelessness, or drowsiness, or stupidity, you will admit to me, that it would be a salutary regulation, if the generality of Christians were accustomed to humble themselves by some solemn act of confession. For though the ceremony, which the Lord enjoined on the Israelites, was a part of the tutelage of the law, yet the thing itself, in some measure, belongs also to us. And, indeed, we see that in all well-regulated churches this custom is advantageously observed; that on every Lord's day the minister makes a formal confession, in which he represents all as guilty of sin, and supplicates pardon from the Lord on behalf of all. Finally, by this key the gate of prayer is opened, both to individuals in private, and in public to all the congregation.

XII. Moreover, the Scripture sanctions two kinds of private confession: one to be made for our own sake, which is referred to in the direction of James, that we should "confess our faults one to another;" (i) for he means, that, revealing our infirmities to one another, we should assist each other with mutual advice and consolation: another, which is to be made for the sake of our neighbour, to pacify and reconcile him to us, if we have done him any injury. In the former species of confession,

(i) James v. 16.

though James, by not expressly appointing any one into whose bosom we should disburden ourselves, leaves us quite at liberty to confess to any member of the church who shall appear most suitable; yet, since the pastors must generally be considered more proper than others, we ought chiefly to make choice of them. I say that they are more suitable than others, since, in their very vocation to the ministry, they are designated by the Lord, to instruct us to subdue and correct our sins, and to console us with a confidence of pardon. [F]or though the office of mutual admonition and reproof is committed to all, yet it is especially confided to ministers. And so, while we all ought mutually to console and confirm each other in a confidence of the Divine mercy, yet we see, that ministers are constituted witnesses and sureties of it, that they may afford our consciences a stronger assurance of the remission of sins; inso-much, that they themselves are said to remit sins and to loose souls. (k)] When you find this attributed to them, consider that it is for your benefit. Therefore, let every believer remember that it is his duty, if he feels such secret anguish or affliction from a sense of his sins, that he cannot extricate himself without some exterior aid, not to neglect the remedy offered him by the Lord: which is, that in order to alleviate his distress, he should use private confession with his pastor, and to obtain consolation, should privately implore his assistance, whose office it is, both publicly and privately, to comfort the people of God with the doctrine of the Gospel. But we should always observe such a degree of moderation, as to lay no yoke on the conscience, where God has given no positive command. Hence it follows, that such confession ought to be free, so as not to be required of all, but only to be recommended to those who conceive themselves to need it. It follows also, that they who practise it on account of their need of it, should neither be compelled by any precept, nor be induced by any artifice, to enumerate all their sins; but only so far as they shall think beneficial to themselves, that they may receive solid consolation. Faithful pastors ought not only to leave the churches in possession of this liberty, but also to defend and vindicate it

(k) Matt. xvi. 19.—xviii. 18. John xx. 23.

with all their power, if they wish to preserve their ministry from tyranny, and the people from superstition.

XIII. Concerning the other species of confession, Christ says, in the Gospel of Matthew; "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." (l) Thus is that charity, which has been broken by our offence, to be repaired by acknowledging the fault we have committed, and imploring forgiveness. In this kind is comprehended the confession of those who have sinned to the offence of the whole church. For, if Christ esteems the private offence of one man of such importance, as to prohibit from the sacred ordinances all those who have sinned against their brethren, till they have been restored to favour by an adequate satisfaction; how much stronger is the reason, that he who, by any evil example, has injured the whole Church, should reconcile it to himself by an acknowledgment of his guilt? Thus was the Corinthian readmitted to the communion, after having submitted to reproof. (m) This mode of confession is stated by Cyprian to have been practised in the ancient Church. "They repent (says he) in due time; and afterwards they come to confession; and by the imposition of the hands of the bishop and clergy, they receive a right to communion." The Scripture knows nothing of any other method or form of confession; and it is not our province to impose new chains on men's consciences, which Christ most strictly forbids to reduce under the yoke of bondage. But that the sheep should present themselves to their pastor, whenever they desire to partake of the sacred supper, I am so far from opposing, that I earnestly wish it were universally observed. For those who experience distress of conscience may receive singular benefit from such an interview; and those who require to be admonished, will thus afford an opportunity for admonitions: provided that care be always taken to guard against tyranny and superstition.

XIV. The power of the keys is exercised in these three kinds of confession: either when the whole church implores

(l) Matt. v. 23, 24

(m) 2 Cor. ii. 6.

pardon by a solemn acknowledgment of its transgressions; or when an individual who, by any remarkable crime, has occasioned a common offence, declares his repentance; or when he who needs the assistance of the minister on account of the disquietude of his conscience, discloses his infirmity to him. The removal of an offence proceeds on a different principle; because, though it is also designed to produce peace of conscience, yet the principal end is, that animosity may be destroyed, and the minds of men united in the bonds of peace. But this advantage, which I have mentioned, is by no means to be despised, that we may confess our sins with the greater readiness. For, when the whole church stands as it were before the tribunal of God, when they confess themselves guilty, and have no refuge but in the Divine mercy; it is no mean or trivial consolation to have Christ's ambassador present, furnished with the mandate of reconciliation, by whom they may have their absolution pronounced. Here the usefulness of the keys is deservedly celebrated, when this embassy is rightly performed with becoming order and reverence. So, when he who had, in some measure, alienated himself from the Church, is pardoned and restored to the unity of the brethren, how great a blessing does he experience in knowing himself to be forgiven by them, to whom Christ hath said, "Whose soever sins ye shall remit on earth, they shall be remitted in heaven!" (*n*) nor is private absolution less efficacious or beneficial, when it is requested by those who need a particular remedy for the relief of their infirmities. For it frequently happens, that he who hears the general promises, which are addressed to the whole congregation of believers, nevertheless remains in some suspense, and his mind is still disquieted with doubts of the forgiveness of his sins. The same person, if he discloses to his pastor the secret distress of his mind, and hears this language of the Gospel particularly directed to him, "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee," (*o*) will encourage his mind to an assurance, and will be liberated from that trepidation with which he was before disturbed. But when we are treating of the keys, we must always be cautious, not to dream of any power distinct from the

(*n*) Matt. xviii. 18. John xx. 23.(*o*) Matt. ix. 2.

preaching of the Gospel. This subject will again be discussed more fully in another place, where we shall have to treat of the government of the Church; and there we shall see, that all the power of binding and loosing, which Christ hath conferred on the Church, is inseparable from the word. But this is chiefly applicable to the ministry of the keys, the whole force and meaning of which consists in this, that the grace of the Gospel should be confirmed and sealed as it were, to the minds of the faithful, in public as well as private, by those whom the Lord hath ordained to this office; which cannot be done but by preaching alone.

XV. But what is the doctrine of the Romish divines? They maintain, that all persons, of both sexes, as soon as they shall have arrived at years of discretion, should once at least in every year, confess all their sins to their own priest; that there is no remission of sin, unless they have firmly resolved to confess it; that unless they fulfil this resolution, when opportunity offers, there is no admittance for them into Paradise; and moreover, that the priest has the power of the keys, with which he may loose the sinner or bind him; because, Christ hath not said in vain, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven." (*p*) But concerning this power, they have obstinate contentions among themselves. Some say, that there is essentially but one key, namely, the power of binding and loosing; that knowledge is required indeed for the good use of it, but that it is only like an accessory, not an essential concomitant. Others, perceiving this to be too unlimited a license, have mentioned two keys, discretion and power. Others again, observing that the wickedness of the priests was restrained by such moderation, have invented other keys, an authority of discerning, which they might use in pronouncing decisions; and power, which they might exert in executing their sentences; with knowledge, to assist as a counsellor. But they venture not to explain this binding and loosing simply to mean, forgiving and obliterating sins; because they hear the Lord proclaiming by the prophet: "I am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour. I, even I, am he which blotteth out thy transgres-

sions.” (q) But they say, that it belongs to the priest to pronounce who are bound or loosed, and to declare whose sins are remitted or retained: and that he declares it, either by confession, when he absolves and retains sins; or by his sentence, when he excommunicates, and when he receives to the communion of the sacraments. Lastly, when they perceive that they are not yet extricated from this difficulty, but that it may always be objected, that their priests frequently bind and loose improper persons, who are not therefore bound or loosed in heaven; as their last resource, they reply, that the commission of the keys must be understood with some limitation, Christ having promised, that the sentence of the priest, which has been justly delivered, according to the merits of the persons bound or loosed, shall be confirmed at his tribunal. They add also, that these keys were given by Christ to all priests, who receive them from the bishops on their promotion to the sacerdotal office; but that the free use of them belongs only to those who exercise ecclesiastical functions; that the keys themselves remain indeed with the excommunicated or suspended ones, but that they are rusty and disused. And those who advance these things may justly be considered modest and sober, in comparison with others, who, on a new anvil, have fabricated new keys, with which they tell us the treasure of the Church is locked up; which we shall examine in the proper place.

XVI. I shall briefly reply to each of these things; though without noticing, at present, the justice or injustice with which they bind the souls of the faithful by their laws; as that will be considered in due order. But when they impose a law respecting the enumeration of all sins; when they deny that sin is forgiven, but on condition that a firm resolution has been formed to confess it; when they say that there remains no entrance into Paradise, if the opportunity of confession has been neglected: this is altogether intolerable. Must all sins be enumerated? David, who (I suppose) had often meditated the confession of his sins, nevertheless exclaimed; “Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.” (r) And in another place; “Mine iniquities are gone over mine

(q) Isaiah xliii. 11, 25.

(r) Psalm xix. 12.

head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.”(s) He had just apprehensions of the vast abyss of our sins, of the numerous species of our crimes, of the many heads this monster bore, and the long tail it drew after it. Therefore, he attempted not to detail his transgressions, but from the abyss of his distresses cried to the Lord, “I am afflicted and ready to die; my spirit is overwhelmed within me; I dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead;”(t) “the sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me:”(v) “I sink in deep mire; deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink.”(w) Who can now think of recounting his sins, when he sees that David was unable to enter on an enumeration of his?

XVII. The souls of those who have been affected with any discoveries of God, have been most cruelly tormented by this fatal delusion. First, they called themselves to an account, they divided sins into boughs, branches, twigs, and leaves, according to the distinctions of these confessors; then they examined the qualities, quantities, and circumstances; and the business made some little progress. But, when they had advanced farther, they were surrounded on all sides by the sea and the sky, no port, no haven in prospect: the more they had passed over, the greater mass was always accumulating on their view; they beheld as it were lofty mountains rising before them, and no time or labour seemed to encourage the least hope of escaping. Thus they remained in extreme distress, and after all, found it terminate in nothing but despair. Then the remedy applied by those cruel murderers, to alleviate the wounds which they had made, was, that every one should do to the uttermost of his ability. But new cares again disturbed, and new agonies again excruciated, these miserable souls. I have not devoted sufficient time: I have not applied with proper diligence: I have omitted many things through negligence, and the forgetfulness which arises from negligence is inexcusable. To assuage such pains, other remedies were now added: Repent of your negligence; if it be not too great, it will be forgiven. But all these things cannot heal the wound; nor do they act as alleviations of the malady, but rather as poisons concealed in honey, that

(s) Psalm lxxxviii. 15.

(v) Ibid. cxvi. 3.

(t) Ibid. cxliii. 3, 4.

(w) Ibid. lxix. 2, 14.

they may not by their harshness offend at the first taste, but may penetrate into the inmost parts before they are perceived. This terrible injunction, therefore, is always pursuing them and resounding in their ears, "Confess all your sins:" nor can that terror be appeased but by some certain consolation. Here let the reader consider the possibility of taking an account of the actions of a whole year, and selecting the sins of every day; since experience convinces every man that, when at evening he comes to examine the delinquencies of only one day, his memory is confounded by their great multitude and variety. I speak not of stupid hypocrites, who, if they have noticed three or four gross sins, imagine they have discharged their duty; but of the true worshippers of God, who, when they find themselves overwhelmed with the examination they have made, conclude, in the language of John, "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart." (x) They tremble therefore before that Judge, whose knowledge far exceeds our apprehension.

XVIII. The acquiescence of a great part of the world in such emollients, administered to mitigate this mortal poison, was not indulged from a belief that God was satisfied, or because they were altogether satisfied themselves; but that, like mariners, having cast anchor in the midst of the sea, they might enjoy a short respite from the toils of navigation, or like a fatigued and fainting traveller, might lie down in the road. I shall not take much trouble to establish this point; for every man may be his own witness of it. I will briefly state the nature of this law. First, it is absolutely impracticable; therefore it can only destroy, condemn, confound, and precipitate into ruin and despair. In the next place, it diverts sinners from a true sense of their sins, and makes them hypocrites, ignorant both of God and themselves. For while they are wholly employed in enumerating their sins, they forget, in the mean time, that latent source of vices, their secret iniquities and inward pollutions, a knowledge of which is above all things necessary to a consideration of their misery. But the most certain rule of confession is to acknowledge and confess the abyss of our guilt to be vast beyond all our comprehension. The publican's confession appears to have been composed according to this

rule; "God be merciful to me a sinner." (*y*) As though he had said, "All that I am is utterly sinful; I cannot reach the magnitude of my sins, either with my tongue or with my mind; let the abyss of thy mercy swallow up this abyss of sin." But you will say, Are not all our sins then to be confessed? Is no confession accepted by God unless it be comprised in these precise words, "I am a sinner?" I reply, that we should rather endeavour, as far as we possibly can, to pour out our whole heart before the Lord; and not only confess ourselves sinners in a single expression, but truly and cordially acknowledge ourselves such; and consider in all our reflections, how great and various is the pollution of sin; not only that we are unclean, but the nature and extent of our impurity; not only that we are debtors, but the magnitude and number of the debts with which we are burdened; not only that we are wounded, but what a multitude of mortal wounds we have received. Yet when the sinner has wholly unbosomed himself before God in this acknowledgment, let him seriously and sincerely reflect, that more sins still remain, and that the secret recesses of his guilt are too deep to be entire disclosed. And therefore let him exclaim with David, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." (*w*) Now when they affirm, that sins are not forgiven, without a strong resolution having been formed to confess them, and that the gate of Paradise is shut against him who has neglected an opportunity afforded him of confessing; far be it from us to make them such a concession. For there is no other remission of sins now than there always has been. Among all those who are said to have obtained remission of sins from Christ, none are said to have made a confession in the ear of any priest. Nor indeed was it possible for them thus to confess, when there were no confessional priests, and confession itself was altogether unknown. And this confession was unheard of for many ages after, during which sins were forgiven without this condition. But, not to debate any longer as respecting a doubtful point, "the word of God, which abideth for ever," (*x*) is perfectly clear: "If the wicked will turn from all his sins, all his transgres-

(*y*) Luke xviii. 13.(*w*) Psalm xix. 12.(*x*) 1 Peter i. 23.

sions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him." (y) He who presumes to make any addition to this declaration, binds not sins, but limits the mercy of God. When they contend that judgment cannot be given without a knowledge of the cause, we are prepared with an answer, that they are guilty of arrogant presumption in creating themselves judges. And it is surprising that they so securely fabricate principles for themselves, which no man of sound understanding will admit. They boast that the office of binding and loosing is committed to them, as though it were a kind of jurisdiction annexed to examination. That the apostles were strangers to this authority, their whole doctrine proclaims; and to know certainly whether the sinner be loosed, belongs not to the priest, but to him of whom absolution is implored: since the priest who hears the confession, can never know whether the enumeration of sins be true and perfect. Thus there would be no absolution, but what must be restricted to the words of the person to be judged. Besides, the loosing of sins depends entirely on faith and repentance; which both elude the knowledge of man, when sentence is to be given respecting another. It follows, therefore, that the certainty of binding and loosing is not subject to the decision of an earthly judge; because a minister, in the legitimate execution of his office, can pronounce only a conditional absolution; but that the declaration, "*Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted,*" is spoken for the sake of sinners, to preclude every doubt that the pardon, which is promised according to the command and word of God, will be ratified in heaven.

XIX. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, if we condemn and desire the total removal of this auricular confession, a thing so pestilent, and in so many respects injurious to the Church. Even if it were a thing abstractedly indifferent, yet, since it is of no use or benefit, but has occasioned so much impiety, sacrilege, and error; who can refuse to admit, that it ought to be immediately abolished? They mention, indeed, some uses, which they boast of as very beneficial; but these are mere fictions, or productive of no advantage whatever. One circum-

stance they state as a peculiar recommendation, that the shame of the person who confesses is a grievous punishment, by which the sinner is rendered more cautious in future, and prevents the vengeance of God by punishing himself. As though we humble not a man with a sufficient degree of shame, when we summon him to the supreme tribunal of heaven, to the cognizance of God! It is wonderful advantage indeed, if we cease to sin through a shame of one man, but are never ashamed of having God for a witness of our evil conscience. Though this very notion is utterly false; for it is universally observable, that nothing produces a greater confidence or licentiousness in sinning, than the idea entertained by some men, after they have made their confession to a priest, that they may "wipe their mouth and say, I have done no wickedness." (2) And they not only become more presumptuous in their sins throughout the year, but, having no concern about confession for the rest of the year, they never aspire after God, they never retire into themselves, but accumulate sins upon sins, till they disembody them, as they imagine, all at once. But when they have done this, they conceive themselves to be exonerated of their burden, and to have transferred from God the judgment they have conferred on the priest: and that they have deprived God of remembrance, by the information they have communicated to the priest. Besides, who rejoices to see the day of confession approaching? Who goes to confess with alacrity of heart; and does not rather come with unwillingness and reluctance, as though he were forcibly dragging to a prison; except perhaps the priests, who pleasantly entertain themselves with mutual narrations of their exploits, as with humorous anecdotes? I will not soil much paper by relating the monstrous abominations with which auricular confession abounds. I only remark, if that holy man was not guilty of indiscretion, who on account of one rumour of fornication banished confession from his church, or rather from the memory of his people; we are thus reminded of what ought to be done in the present day, when rapes, adulteries, incests, and seductions, exceed all enumeration.

XX. As the advocates of confession plead the power of the

(2) Prov. xxx. 20.

keys, and rest upon it all the merits of their cause, we must examine the weight that is due to this argument. Are the keys then (say they) given without any reason? Is it without any cause that it is said, "Whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven?" (a) Do we then frustrate the declaration of Christ? I reply, that there was an important reason why the keys should be given: as I have already stated, and shall again more explicitly shew, when I come to treat of excommunication. But what if I refute the whole of their pretensions with one argument, that their priests are not vicars or successors of the apostles? But this also will be discussed in another place. Now they set up, as their principal defence, an engine by which their whole structure may be completely demolished. For Christ never conferred on his apostles the power of binding and loosing, till after he had given them the Holy Ghost. I deny, therefore, that the power of the keys belongs to any, who have not previously received the Holy Ghost. I deny that any one can use the keys, unless the Spirit guide and instruct him, and direct him how he ought to act. They impertinently pretend, that they have the Holy Ghost; but in reality they deny it: unless perhaps they imagine, as they certainly do, that the Holy Ghost is a useless and worthless thing; but they will not be believed. By this weapon they are completely vanquished. Of whatever door they pretend to have the key, they should always be asked, whether they have the Holy Ghost, who is the arbiter and governor of the keys? If they reply in the affirmative, they must be questioned again, whether it be possible for the Holy Ghost to err? This they will not dare expressly to avow, though they obliquely insinuate it in their doctrine. We may justly infer, therefore, that no priests have the power of the keys, who, without discrimination, frequently loose what the Lord had designed to be bound, and bind what he had commanded to be loosed.

XXI. When they find themselves convinced by evident experience, that they promiscuously loose and bind the worthy and the unworthy, they arrogate to themselves the power without knowledge. And though they dare not deny that know-

(a) Matt. xviii. 18.

ledge is requisite to a good use of it; yet they tell us, that the power itself is committed to improper dispensers of it. But this is the power, "Whatsoever thou bindest or loosest on earth, shall be bound or loosed in heaven." Either the promise of Christ must be false, or the binding and loosing is rightly performed by those who are endued with this power. Nor is there any room for them to quibble, that the declaration of Christ is limited according to the merits of the person that is bound or loosed. We also acknowledge, that none can be bound or loosed, but such as are worthy to be bound or loosed. But the preachers of the Gospel, and the Church, have the word as the standard of this worthiness. In this word, the ministers of the Gospel may promise to all, remission of sins in Christ through faith; they may denounce damnation against all and upon all who receive not Christ. In this word, the Church pronounces, that fornicators, adulterers, thieves, murderers, misers, and extortioners, have no part in the kingdom of God; and binds such with the firmest bonds. In the same word, the Church looses and comforts them who repent. (b) But what kind of power will it be, not to know what ought to be bound or loosed? and not to be able to bind or loose without this knowledge? Why then do they say, that they absolve by the authority committed to them, when their absolution is uncertain? Why should we concern ourselves about this imaginary power, if it be quite useless? But I have already ascertained, either that it has no existence, or that it is too uncertain to be considered of any value. For, as they confess that there are many of the priests who make no right use of the keys, and that the power has no efficacy without a legitimate use of it, who will assure me, that he by whom I am loosed is a good dispenser of the keys? But if he be a bad one, what else does he possess but this frivolous dispensation of them: "What ought to be bound or loosed in you, I know not, since I am destitute of the proper use of the keys; but if you deserve it, I absolve you?" But as much as this might be done, I will not say by a layman, (since they could not hear that with any patience) but by a Turk or a devil. For it is equivalent to saying, "I

have not word of God, which is the certain rule of loosing; but I am invested with authority to absolve you, on condition that your merits deserve it." We see then what they intended, when they defined the keys to be an authority of discerning, and a power of executing, attended with knowledge as a counsellor, to promote the good use. The truth is, that they wished to reign according to their own licentious inclinations, independently of God and his word.

XXII. If it be objected, that the legitimate ministers of Christ will be equally perplexed in their office, since the absolution, which depends on faith, will ever be doubtful; and that therefore sinners will have but a slight consolation, or none at all, since the minister himself who is not a competent judge of their faith, is not certain of their absolution: we are prepared with an answer. They say, that no sins are remitted by the priest, but those which fall under his cognizance; thus, according to them, remission depends on the judgment of the priest; and unless he sagaciously discerns who are worthy of pardon, the whole transaction is frivolous and useless. In short, the power of which they speak is a jurisdiction annexed to examination, to which pardon and absolution are restricted. In this statement, we find no firm footing, but rather a bottomless abyss; for where the confession is deficient, the hope of pardon is also imperfect: in the next place, the priest himself must necessarily remain in suspense, while he is ignorant whether the sinner faithfully enumerates all his crimes: lastly, such is the ignorance and inexperience of priests, that the majority of them are no more qualified for the exercise of this office, than a shoemaker for cultivating the ground: and almost all the rest ought justly to be suspicious of themselves. Hence then the perplexity and doubtfulness of the Papal absolution, because they maintain it to be founded on the person of the priest; and not only so, but on his knowledge, so that he can only judge of what he hears, examines, and ascertains. Now, should any one inquire of these good Doctors, whether a sinner be reconciled to God on the remission of part of his sins, I know not what answer they can give, without being constrained to acknowledge the inefficacy of whatever the priest may pronounce concerning the remission of sins which he has heard enumerated, as long

as the guilt of others still remains. What a pernicious anxiety must oppress the conscience of the person that confesses, appears from this consideration, that while he relies on the discretion of the priest, (as they express themselves) he decides nothing by the word of God. The doctrine maintained by us, is perfectly free from all these absurdities. For absolution is conditional, in such a way, that the sinner may be confident that God is propitious to him, provided he sincerely seeks an atonement in the sacrifice of Christ, and relies upon the grace offered to him. Thus it is impossible for him to err, who, according to his duty as a preacher, promulgates what he has been taught by the Divine word: and the sinner may receive a certain and clear absolution, simply on condition of embracing the grace of Christ, according to that general rule of our Lord himself, which has been impiously despised among the papists, "According to your faith be it unto you." (c)

XXIII. Their absurd confusion of the clear representations of the Scripture concerning the power of the keys, I have promised to expose in another place, and a more suitable opportunity will present itself, in discussing the government of the Church. But let the reader remember, that they preposterously pervert to auricular and secret confession, passages which are spoken by Christ, partly of the preaching of the Gospel, and partly of excommunication. Wherefore, when they object that the power of loosing was committed to the apostles, which is now exercised by the priests in remitting the sins confessed to them, it is evidently an assumption of a false and frivolous principle; for the absolution consequent on faith, is nothing but a declaration of pardon taken from the gracious promise of the Gospel: but the other absolution, which depends on ecclesiastical discipline, relates not to secret sins, but is rather for the sake of example, that the public offence of the Church may be removed. They rake together testimonies from every quarter, to prove, that it is not sufficient to make a confession of sins to God, or to laymen, unless they are likewise submitted to the cognizance of a priest; but they ought to be ashamed of such a disgusting employment. For, if the ancient Fathers sometimes persuade sinners to disburden themselves to their own pastor,

it cannot be understood of a particular enumeration of sins, which was not then practised. Moreover, Lombard and others of the same class have been so unfair, that they appear to have designedly consulted spurious books, in order to use them as a pretext to deceive the unwary. They do, indeed, properly acknowledge, that since loosing always accompanies repentance, there really remains no bond where any one has experienced repentance, although he may not yet have made a confession; and therefore, that then the priest does not so much remit sins, as pronounce and declare them to be remitted. Though in the word *declare* they insinuate a gross error, substituting a ceremony in the place of instruction: but by adding, that he who had already obtained pardon before God, is absolved in the view of the Church, they unseasonably apply to the particular use of every individual, what we have already asserted to have been appointed as a part of the common discipline of the Church, when the offence of some great and notorious crime requires to be removed. But they presently corrupt and destroy all the moderation they had observed, by adding another mode of remission, that is, with an injunction of punishment and satisfaction; by which they arrogantly ascribe to their priests the power of dividing into two parts what God hath every where promised as complete. For, as he simply requires repentance and faith, this partition or exception is an evident sacrilege. For it is just as if the priest, sustaining the character of a tribune, should intercede with God, and would not suffer God of his mere goodness to receive any one into favour, unless he had lain prostrate before the tribunitial seat, and there been punished.

XXIV. The whole argument comes to this, that if they will represent God as the author of this fictitious confession, it is a full proof of their error; for I have pointed out their fallacies in the few passages which they quote. But since it is evident that this is a law of human imposition, I assert that it is also tyrannical and injurious to God, who binds the consciences of men by his word, and whose will it is that they should be free from the authority of men. Now when they prescribe as a necessary prerequisite to pardon that which God hath chosen should be free, I maintain that it is an intolerable sacrilege:

for nothing is more peculiarly the prerogative of God than the remission of sins, in which our salvation consists. I have moreover proved, that this tyranny was not introduced till the world was oppressed with the rudest barbarism. I have likewise shewn that it is a pestilent law, because, if wretched souls are affected with the fear of God, it precipitates them into despair; or if they are in a state of careless security, it soothes them with vain flatteries, and renders them still more insensible. Lastly, I have stated, that all the mitigations which they add, have no other tendency than to perplex, obscure, and corrupt the pure doctrine, and to conceal their impieties under false and illusive colours.

XXV. The third place in repentance they assign to satisfaction; all their jargon concerning which may be overturned in one word. They say, that it is not sufficient for a penitent to abstain from his former sins, and to change his morals for the better, unless he make satisfaction to God for the crimes which he has committed; and that there are many helps by which we may redeem sins, such as tears, fastings, oblations, and works of charity; that by these the Lord is to be propitiated, by these our debts are to be paid to the Divine justice, by these we must compensate for the guilt of our sins, by these we must merit pardon; for that though, in the plenitude of his mercy, he hath remitted our sins, yet, in the discipline of justice, he retains the punishment, and that this is the punishment which must be redeemed by satisfactions. [All that they say, however, comes to this conclusion, that we obtain the pardon of our transgressions from the mercy of God, but that it is by the intervention of the merit of works, by which the evil of our sins must be compensated, that the divine justice may receive the satisfaction which is due to it.] To such falsehoods, I oppose the gratuitous remission of sins, than which there is nothing more clearly revealed in the Scripture. In the first place, what is remission, but a gift of mere liberality? For the creditor is not said to forgive, who testifies on the bond that the debt has been paid, but he who, without any payment, merely through his beneficence, voluntarily cancels the obligation. In the next place, why is this said to be free, but to preclude every idea of satisfaction? With what confidence then can they still set up

their *satisfactions*, which are overthrown by such a mighty thunderbolt? But when the Lord proclaims by Isaiah, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins:" (*d*) does not he evidently declare, that he derives the cause and foundation of forgiveness merely from his own goodness? Besides, while the whole Scripture bears testimony to Christ, that "remission of sins" is to be "received through his name," (*e*) does it not exclude all other names? How then do they teach, that it is received through the name of *satisfactions*? Nor can they deny that they ascribe this to *satisfactions*, although they call their intervention *subsidiary*. For when the Scripture states it to be "through the name of Christ," it signifies, that we bring nothing, that we plead nothing, of our own, but rely solely on the mediation of Christ; as Paul, after affirming, "That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," immediately adds the method and nature of it, "for he hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us." (*f*)

XXVI. But such is their perverseness, they reply that both remission of sins and reconciliation are obtained at once, when in baptism we are received into the favour of God, through Christ: that if we fall after baptism, we are to be raised up again by *satisfactions*; and that the blood of Christ avails us nothing, any farther than it is dispensed by the keys of the Church. I am not speaking of a doubtful point, for they have betrayed their impiety in the most explicit terms, and this is the case not only of two or three, but of all the schoolmen. For their Master, Lombard, after having confessed that, according to the doctrine of Peter, Christ suffered the punishment of sins on the cross, (*g*) immediately connects that sentiment with the addition of the following exception; that all the temporal punishments of sins are remitted in baptism; but that after baptism they are diminished by means of repentance, so that our repentance co-operates with the cross of Christ. But John speaks a very different language: "If any man sin, we have

(*d*) Isaiah xliii. 25.(*f*) 2 Cor. v. 19, 21.(*e*) Acts x. 43.(*g*) 1 Peter ii. 24.

an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." (*h*) He certainly addresses the faithful, and when he exhibits Christ to them as the propitiation for sins, proves that there is no other satisfaction by which our offended God may be propitiated or appeased. He says not, God was once reconciled to you by Christ, now seek some other means; but represents him as a perpetual advocate who by his intercession restores us to the Father's favour for ever, and as a perpetual propitiation by which our sins are expiated. For this is perpetually true, that was declared by the other John, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." (*i*) He takes them away himself, I say, and no other; that is, since he alone is the Lamb of God, he alone is the oblation, the expiation, the satisfaction for sins. For the right and power to forgive being the peculiar prerogative of the Father, as distinguished from the Son, as we have already seen, Christ is here represented in another capacity, since by transferring to himself the punishment we deserved, he has obliterated our guilt before the throne of God. Whence it follows, that we shall not be partakers of the atonement of Christ in any other way, unless he remain in the exclusive possession of that honour, which they unjustly assume to themselves who endeavour to appease God by *satisfactions* of their own.

XXVII. And here two things demand our consideration; that the honour, which belongs to Christ, should be preserved to him entire and undiminished; and that consciences assured of the pardon of their sins, should have peace with God. Isaiah says, "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," and "with his stripes we are healed." (*k*) Peter, repeating the same truth in different words, says, that Christ "bare our sins in his own body on the tree." (*l*) Paul informs us, that "sin was condemned in the flesh," (*m*) when "Christ was made sin for us;" (*n*) that is, that the power and curse of sin were destroyed in his flesh, when he was given as a victim, to sustain the

(*h*) 1 John ii. 1, 2, 12.

(*i*) John i. 29.

(*k*) Isaiah liii. 6, 5.

(*l*) 1 Peter ii. 24.

(*m*) Rom. viii. 3.

(*n*) 2 Cor. v. 21. Gal. iii. 13.

whole load of our sins, with their curse and execrations, with the dreadful judgment of God, and the condemnation of death. We cannot here listen to those foolish fictions; that after the initial purgation or baptism, none of us can have any further experience of the efficacy of the sufferings of Christ, than in proportion to a satisfactory repentance. But whenever we have fallen, the Scripture recalls us to the satisfaction of Christ alone. Now review their pestilent follies; "that the grace of God operates alone in the first remission of sins; but that if we afterwards fall, our works co-operate with it in the impetration of a second pardon." If these things be admitted, does Christ remain exclusively possessed of what we have before attributed to him? How immensely wide is the difference between these positions; that our iniquities are laid on Christ to be expiated by him, and that they are expiated by our own works! that Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and that God must be propitiated by works! But with respect to pacifying the conscience, what peace will it afford any one, to hear that sins are redeemed by satisfaction? When will he be assured of the accomplishment of satisfaction? Therefore he will always doubt whether God be propitious to him, he will always be in a state of fluctuation and terror. For those who content themselves with trivial satisfactions, have too contemptuous sentiments of the judgment of God; and reflect very little on the vast evil of sin, as we shall elsewhere observe. But though we should allow them to expiate some sins by a proper satisfaction, yet what will they do when they are overwhelmed with so many sins, that to make adequate satisfactions for them, even a hundred lives entirely devoted to it could not possibly be sufficient? Besides, all the passages in which remission of sins is declared, are not addressed to Catechumens, or persons not yet baptized, but to the regenerated sons of God, and those who have been long nurtured in the bosom of the Church. That embassy which Paul so splendidly extols, "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God," (o) is directed not to strangers, but to those who had already been regenerated. But, dismissing all satisfactions, he sends them to the cross of Christ. Thus

when he writes to the Colossians, that "Christ had made peace by the blood of his cross, and reconciled all things both in earth and in heaven," (*p*) he restricts not this to the moment of our reception into the Church, but extends it through our whole course; as is evident from the context, where he says that believers "have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." But it is unnecessary to accumulate more passages, which are frequently occurring.

XXVIII. Here they take refuge in a foolish distinction, that some sins are *venial* and some *mortal*; that a great satisfaction is due for mortal sins; but that those which are venial are purged away by easier remedies, by the Lord's prayer, the aspersion of holy water, and the absolution of the mass. Thus they sport and trifle with God. But though they are incessantly talking of venial and mortal sins, yet they have never been able to discriminate one from the other, except by making impiety and impurity of heart a venial sin. But we maintain, according to the doctrine of the Scripture, the only standard of righteousness and sin, that "the wages of sin is death," and "the soul that sinneth, it shall die;" (*q*) but that the sins of believers are venial, not because they are not deserving of death, but because, through the mercy of God, "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;" (*r*) because they are not imputed to them, but obliterated by a pardon. I know their unjust calumnies against this doctrine of ours; they assert it to be the Stoical paradox concerning the equality of sins; but they will easily be refuted out of their own lips. For I ask, whether among those very sins which they confess to be mortal, they do not acknowledge one to be greater or less than another. It does not therefore immediately follow, that sins are equal because they are all mortal. Since the Scripture declares that the wages of sin is death, that obedience to the law is the way of life, and the transgression of it death, they cannot evade this decision. What end then will they find to satisfactions in so great an accumulation of sins? If it be the business of one day to satisfy for one sin, while they are employed in that, they involve themselves in more; for the most righteous man cannot

(*p*) Col. i. 20.(*q*) Rom. vi. 23. Ezek. xviii. 20.(*r*) Rom. viii. 1.

pass a single day without falling several times. While they shall be preparing themselves to make satisfactions for these, they will accumulate a numerous or rather an innumerable multitude. Now all confidence in satisfaction is cut off, on what do they depend? How do they still presume to think of making satisfaction?

XXIX. They endeavour to extricate themselves from this difficulty, but without success. They invent a distinction between the guilt and the punishment; and acknowledge that the guilt is forgiven by the Divine mercy, but maintain, that after the remission of the guilt, there still remains the punishment, which the Divine justice requires to be suffered; and therefore, that satisfactions properly relate to the remission of the punishment. What desultory levity is this! Now they confess that remission of guilt is proposed as gratuitous, which they are continually teaching men to merit by prayers, and tears, and other preparations of various kinds. But every thing delivered in the Scripture concerning remission of sins, is diametrically opposite to this distinction. And though I think I have fully established this point already, I will subjoin some additional testimonies, by which our opponents will be so much embarrassed, as notwithstanding all their serpentine elability, to be totally unable ever to extricate themselves. "This is the new covenant," which God hath made with us in Christ, "that he will not remember our iniquities." (*s*) The import of these expressions we learn from another prophet, by whom the Lord says, "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned. When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, he shall surely live, he shall not die." (*t*) "Not to mention righteousness," signifies not to notice it so as to reward it; and "not to remember sins," is, not to inflict punishment for them. This is expressed in other passages by the following phrases: to "cast behind the back," to "blot out as a cloud," to "cast into the depths of the sea," "not to impute," to "cover." (*u*) These forms of expression would clearly convey to us the

(*s*) Jer. xxxi. 31—34. (*t*) Ezek. xviii. 24—28.

(*u*) Isaiah xxxviii. 17. xlv. 22. Micah vii. 19. Psalm xxxii. 1, 2.

sense of the Holy Spirit, if we attended to them with docility. If God punishes sins, he certainly imputes them; if he avenges them, he remembers them; if he cites them to judgment, he does not cover them; if he examines them, he hath not cast them behind his back; if he inspects them, he hath not blotted them out as a cloud; if he scrutinizes them, he hath not cast them into the depths of the sea. And in this manner the subject is clearly explained by Augustine. "If God hath covered sins, he would not look at them; if he would not look at them, he would not take cognizance of them; if he would not take cognizance of them, he would not punish them; he would not know them, he would rather forgive them. Why then hath he said that sins are covered? That they might not be seen. For what is meant by God's seeing sin, but his punishing it?" Let us also hear from another passage of the prophet, on what conditions God remits sins. "Though your sins be as scarlet (says he), they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (w) And in Jeremiah we find this declaration; "In that time the iniquities of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve." (x) Would you briefly know what is the meaning of these words? Consider, on the contrary, the import of the following expressions: "the Lord seweth up iniquity in a bag;" "iniquity is bound up;" "sin is hid;" to "write sins with a pen of iron, and engrave them with the point of a diamond." (y) If they signify that God will execute vengeance, as they undoubtedly do, neither can it be doubted but that, by the contrary declaration, the Lord proclaims his remission of all vindictive punishment. Here I must conjure my readers not to listen to my expositions, but only to pay some deference to the word of God.

XXX. What would Christ have done for us, if punishment for sins were still inflicted on us? For when we say, that he "bare all our sins in his own body on the tree," (z) we intend only, that he sustained the vindictive punishment which was due

(w) Isaiah i. 18. (x) Jer. i. 20. (y) Job xiv. 17. Hosea xiii. 12. Jer. xvii. 1.

(z) 1 Peter ii. 24.

to our sins. This sentiment is more significantly expressed by Isaiah, when he says that the "chastisement (or correction) of our peace was upon him." (a) Now what is the correction of our peace, but the punishment due to sins, and which we must have suffered before we could be reconciled to God, if he had not become our substitute? Thus we see clearly, that Christ bore the punishment of sins, that he might deliver his people from it. And whenever Paul mentions the redemption accomplished by him, he generally calls it *απολυτρωσις*, (b) which signifies not simply redemption, as it is commonly understood, but the price and satisfaction of redemption. Thus he says that Christ "gave himself a ransom" (*αντιλυτρεον*) for us. (c) "What propitiation is there with the Lord (says Augustine) but sacrifice? And what sacrifice is there, but that which has been offered for us in the death of Christ?" But the institutions of the law of Moses, respecting expiations for sins, furnish us with a most powerful argument. For there the Lord prescribes not this or the other method of satisfying, but requires the whole compensation in sacrifices: though he specifies all the rites of expiation with the most particular care, and in the most exact order. How is it that he commands the expiation of sins without any works at all, requiring no other atonement than by sacrifices; but because he intends in this way to declare, that there is only one kind of satisfaction by which his justice is appeased? For the sacrifices then immolated by the Israelites were not considered as the works of men, but were estimated according to their antitype, that is, the one sacrifice of Christ alone. The nature of the compensation which the Lord receives from us is concisely and elegantly expressed by Hosea: "Take away (saith he) all iniquity, O Lord;" here is remission of sins; "so will we render the calves of our lips;" (d) here is satisfaction, which is no other than thanksgiving. I am aware of another still more subtle evasion to which they resort, by distinguishing between eternal punishments and those which are temporal. But when they assert that temporal punishment is any suffering inflicted by God on the body or the soul, eternal death only excepted, this limi-

(a) Isaiah liii. 6.

(b) Rom. iii. 24, &c.

(c) 1 Tim. ii. 6.

(d) Hosea xiv. 2.

tation affords them but little assistance. For the passages which we have cited above, expressly signify, that God receives us into favour on this condition, that in forgiving our guilt, he remits all the punishment that we had deserved. And whenever David or the other prophets implore the pardon of their sins, they at the same time deprecate the punishment, and to this they are impelled by an apprehension of the Divine judgment. Again, when they promise mercy from the Lord, they almost always professedly speak of punishments, and of the remission of them. Certainly when the Lord announces by Ezekiel, that he will put an end to the Babylonian captivity, and that for his own sake, not for the sake of the Jews; he sufficiently shews this deliverance to be gratuitous. Finally, if Christ delivers us from guilt, the punishments consequent upon it must necessarily cease.

XXXI. But as our adversaries also, on their part, arm themselves with testimonies from the Scripture, let us examine what arguments they offer. They reason in this way: David, after having been reprov'd by Nathan the prophet for adultery and murder, receives the pardon of his sin; and yet is afterwards punished by the death of the son that was the fruit of his adultery. (*e*) We are taught to compensate by satisfactions for such punishments as would be inflicted even after the remission of the guilt. For Daniel exhorted Nebuchadnezzar to atone for his sins by acts of mercy. (*f*) And Solomon says, "By mercy and truth, iniquity is purged." (*g*) And that "charity shall cover a multitude of sins," (*h*) is a sentiment confirmed by the united testimony of Solomon and Peter. The Lord also says in Luke, concerning the woman that had been a sinner, "Her sins are forgiven; for she loved much." (*i*) How perversely and preposterously they always estimate the Divine proceedings! But if they had observed, what should by no means have been overlooked, that there are two kinds of Divine judgment; they would have seen, in this correction of David, a species of punishment very different from that which may be considered as vindictive. But since it highly concerns us all, to un-

(*e*) 2 Sam. xii. 13, 14.

(*f*) Dan. iv. 27.

(*g*) Prov. xvi. 6.

(*h*) Prov. x. 12. 1 Peter iv. 8.

(*i*) Luke vii. 47.

derstand the design of those chastisements, with which God corrects our sins; and how greatly they differ from the examples of his indignation pursuing the impious and reprobate; I conceive it will not be unseasonable to give a summary account of them. For the sake of perspicuity, let us call one *vengeance*, or *vindictive judgment*, and the other *chastisement*, or *disciplinary judgment*. In vindictive judgment, God is to be contemplated as taking vengeance on his enemies, so as to exert his wrath against them, to confound, dissipate, and reduce them to nothing. We consider it therefore, strictly speaking, to be the vengeance of God, when the punishment he inflicts is attended with his indignation. In disciplinary judgment, he is not so severe as to be angry; nor does he punish in order to destroy or precipitate into perdition. Wherefore, it is not properly punishment or vengeance, but correction and admonition. The former is the part of a judge, the latter of a father. For a judge, when he punishes an offender, attends to the crime itself, and inflicts punishment according to the nature and aggravations of it. When a father corrects his child with severity, he does it not to take vengeance or satisfaction, but rather to teach him, and render him more cautious for the future. Chrysostom somewhere uses a comparison a little different, which nevertheless comes to the same point: "A son (says he) is beaten; a servant also is beaten; but the latter is punished as a slave, because he has transgressed: the former is chastised as free and a son, that needs to be disciplined." Correction serves to the latter for a probation and reformation, to the former for a scourge and a punishment.

XXXII. To obtain a clear view of the whole subject in a small compass, it is necessary to state two distinctions respecting it. The first is, that wherever there is vindictive punishment, there also is a manifestation of the curse and wrath of God, which he always withholds from believers. Chastisement on the contrary is, as the Scripture teaches us, both a blessing of God, and a testimony of his love. This difference is sufficiently marked in every part of the Divine word. For all the afflictions which the impious endure in the present life, are represented to us as constituting a kind of antechamber of hell, whence they already have a distant prospect of their eternal

damnation: and they are so far from being reformed or receiving any benefit from this, that they are rather prepared by such preludes for that most tremendous vengeance which finally awaits them. On the contrary, the Lord repeatedly chastises his servants, yet does not deliver them over to death: (*k*) wherefore they confess that the strokes of his rod were highly beneficial and instructive to them. As we every where find that the saints bore these corrections with resignation of soul, so they always earnestly deprecated punishments of the former kind. Jeremiah says, "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." (*l*) And David; "O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure." (*m*) Nor is it any objection to this, that the Lord is frequently said to be angry with his children, when he chastises them for their sins. As in Isaiah; "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." (*n*) Habakkuk also; "In wrath remember mercy." (*o*) And Micah; "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." (*p*) Which reminds us, not only that those who are justly punished, receive no advantage from murmuring; but that the faithful derive a mitigation of their sorrow from a consideration of the intention of God. For on the same account he is said to profane his own inheritance, which, however, we know, he never will profane. (*q*) That relates not to the design or disposition of God in punishing, but to the vehement sense of sorrow experienced by those who suffer any of his severity. He not only distresses his believing people with no small degree of rigour, but sometimes wounds them in such a manner, that they seem to themselves to be on the brink of infernal destruction. Thus he declares, that they have deserved his wrath; and this in order that they may be displeased with themselves in their distresses, may be influenced by a greater concern to appease God, and may hasten with solicitude to implore his pardon; but in this very proce-

(*k*) Job v. 17. Prov. iii. 11. Heb. xii. 5—11. Psalm cxviii. 18. cxix. 71.

(*l*) Jer. x. 24, 25. (*m*) Psalm vi. 1. xxxviii. 1. (*n*) Isaiah xii. 1.

(*o*) Hab. iii. 2. (*p*) Micah vii. 9. (*q*) Isaiah xliii. 28. xlvii. 6.

sure he exhibits a brighter testimony of his clemency than of his wrath. The covenant still remains which was made with us in our true Solomon, and the validity of which he, who cannot deceive, hath declared shall never be diminished: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my commandments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him." (r) To assure us of this loving-kindness, he says, that the rod with which he will chastise the posterity of Solomon, and the stripes he will inflict on them, will be "the rod of men, and the stripes of the children of men." (s) While by these phrases he signifies moderation and lenity, he also implies that those who feel his hand exerted against them cannot but be confounded with an extreme and deadly horror. How much he observes this lenity in chastising his Israel, he shews by the prophet: "I have refined thee (says he) but not with silver;" (t) for thou wouldest have been wholly consumed. Though he teaches him that chastisements serve to purify him, yet he adds that he so far moderates them, that they may not exceed what he is able to bear. And this is highly necessary; for the more a man reveres God and devotes himself to the cultivation of piety, he is so much the more tender to bear his wrath. For though the reprobate groan under his scourges, yet because they consider not the cause, but rather turn their backs both on their sins and on the Divine judgments, from this carelessness they contract an insensibility: or because they murmur and resist, and rebel against their judge, that furious impetuosity stupifies them with madness and rage. But the faithful, admonished by the Divine corrections, immediately descend to the consideration of their sins, and, stricken with fear and dread, resort to a suppliant deprecation of punishment. If God did not mitigate these sorrows, with which wretched souls torment themselves, they would be continually fainting even under slight tokens of his wrath.

XXXIII. The second distinction is, that when the reprobate are lashed by the scourges of God in this world, they already

(r) Psalm lxxxix. 20—23.

(s) 2 Sam. vii. 14.

(t) Isaiah xlviii. 10

begin to suffer his vindictive punishments, and though they will not escape with impunity for having disregarded such indications of the Divine wrath, yet they are not punished in order to their repentance, but only that from their great misery, they may prove God to be a judge who will inflict vengeance according to their crimes. On the contrary, the children of God are chastised, not to make satisfaction to him for their sins, but that they may thereby be benefited and brought to repentance. Wherefore we see, that such chastisements relate to the future rather than the past. To express this, I would prefer Chrysostom's language to my own: "For this reason (says he) God punishes us, not to take vengeance for our sins, but to correct us for the future." Thus also Augustine; "That which you suffer, and which causes you to mourn, is a medicine to you, not a punishment; a chastisement, and not damnation. Reject not the scourge, if you desire not to be rejected from the inheritance. All this misery of mankind, under which the world groans, ye know, brethren, that it is a medicinal sorrow, and not a penal one." These passages I have therefore thought proper to quote, that no one might consider the phraseology which I have adopted, to be novel or unusual. And to the same purpose are the indignant complaints in which the Lord frequently expostulates on account of the ingratitude of the people, and their obstinate contempt of all their punishments. In Isaiah; "Why should ye be stricken any more? From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness." (u) But as the prophets abound in such passages, it will be sufficient briefly to have suggested, that God punishes his Church with no other design than to subdue it to repentance. Therefore, when he rejected Saul from the kingdom, he punished him in a vindictive manner; (x) when he deprived David of his infant son, he corrected him in order to his reformation. (y) In this sense we must understand the observation of Paul; "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." (z) That is, when we, the children of God, are afflicted by the hand of our heavenly Father, this is not a punishment to confound us, but only a chastisement

(u) Isaiah i. 5, 6. (x) 1 Sam. xv. 23. (y) 2 Sam. xii. 18. (z) 1 Cor. xi. 32.

to instruct us. In which Augustine evidently coincides with us: for he teaches that the punishments with which men are equally chastised by God, are to be considered in different points of view; because to the saints, after the remission of their sins, they are conflicts and exercises, but to the reprobate, whose sins are not forgiven, they are the penalties due to their iniquity. He also mentions the punishments inflicted on David and other pious persons, and says, that those chastisements tended to promote their humility, and thereby to exercise and prove their piety. And the declaration of Isaiah, that Jerusalem's "iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins;" (a) proves not the pardon of transgressions to depend on the suffering of the punishment, but is just as though he had said, "Punishments enough have now been inflicted on you; and as the severity and multitude of them have harassed you with a long continuance of grief and sorrow, it is time for you to receive the message of complete mercy, that your hearts may be expanded with joy, and experience me to be your Father." For God there assumes the character of a father, who repents even of his righteous severity, when he has been constrained to chastise his son with any degree of rigour.

XXXIV. It is necessary that the faithful should be provided with these reflections in the anguish of afflictions. "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God, upon which his name is called." (b) What would the children of God do, if they believed the severity which they feel to be the vengeance of God upon them? For he who, under the strokes of the Divine hand, considers God as an avenging judge, cannot but conceive of him as incensed against him and hostile to him, and will therefore detest his scourge itself as a curse and condemnation; in a word, he who thinks that God is still determined to punish him, can never be persuaded to believe himself an object of the Divine love. The only one who receives any benefit from the Divine chastisements, is he who considers God as angry with his crimes, but propitious and benevolent towards his person. For otherwise the case must necessarily be similar to what the

(a) Isaiah xl. 2.

(b) 1 Peter iv. 17. Jer. xxv. 29. marg. read.

Psalmist complains of having experienced; "Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off." (c) And what Moses also speaks of; "For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told." (d) On the contrary, David speaking of his paternal chastisements, in order to shew that believers are rather assisted than oppressed by them, sings; "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law; that thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked." (e) It is certainly a severe temptation, when the Lord spares unbelievers and conceals their crimes, while he appears more rigorous towards his own children. For their consolation, therefore, he adds the admonition of the law, whence they may learn, that it is for the promotion of their salvation when they are recalled into the way, but that the impious are precipitated into their errors, which end in the pit. Nor is it of any importance, whether the punishment be eternal or temporal. For wars, famines, plagues, and diseases, are curses from God, as well as the judgment of eternal death itself, when they are inflicted as the instruments of the Lord's wrath and vengeance against the reprobate.

XXXV. Every one, I presume, now perceives the design of the Lord's correction of David, that it was to be a proof of God's extreme displeasure against murder and adultery, with which he declared himself to be so greatly offended in his beloved and faithful servant, and to teach David never again to be guilty of such crimes; but not as a punishment, by which he was to render God a satisfaction for his offence. And we ought to form the same judgment concerning the other correction, in which the Lord afflicted the people with a violent pestilence, on account of the disobedience of David in numbering them. For he freely forgave David the guilt of his sin; but because it was necessary, as a public example to all ages, and also to the humiliation of David, that such an offence should not re-

(c) Psalm lxxxviii. 16.

(d) Psalm xc. 7—9.

(e) Psalm xciv. 12, 13.

main unpunished, he chastised him with extreme severity. This end we should keep in view also in the universal curse of mankind. For since we all, even after having obtained pardon, still suffer the miseries which were inflicted on our first parent as the punishment of sin, we consider such afflictions as admonitions how grievously God is displeased with the transgression of his law; that being thus dejected and humbled with a consciousness of our miserable condition, we may aspire with greater ardour after true blessedness. Now he is very unwise, who imagines that the calamities of the present life are inflicted upon us as satisfactions for the guilt of sin. This appears to me to have been the meaning of Chrysostom, when he said, "If God therefore inflicts punishments on us, that while we are persisting in sins he may call us to repentance; after a discovery of repentance the punishment will be unnecessary." Wherefore he treats one person with greater severity, and another with more tender indulgence, as he knows to be suitable to every man's particular disposition. Therefore, when he means to suggest that he is not excessively severe in the infliction of punishment, he reproaches an obdurate and obstinate people, that though they have been corrected, they have not forsaken their sins. (*f*) In this sense he complains, that "Ephraim is a cake not turned," (*g*) that is, scorched on one side, unbaked on the other; because his corrections did not penetrate the hearts of the people, so as to expel their vices and render them proper objects of pardon. By expressing himself in this manner, he certainly gives us to understand, that as soon as they shall have repented, he will be immediately appeased, and that the rigour which he exercises in chastising offences is extorted from him by our obstinacy, but would be prevented by a voluntary reformation. Yet since our obduracy and ignorance are such, as universally to need castigation, our most wise Father is pleased to exercise all his children, without exception, with the strokes of his rod, as long as they live. It is astonishing why they fix their eyes thus on the example of David alone, and are unaffected by so many instances in which they might behold a gratuitous remission of sins. The

(*f*) Jer. v. 3.(*g*) Hosea vii. 8.

Publican is said to have gone down from the temple justified; (*h*) no punishment follows. Peter obtained the pardon of his sins; "We read," says Ambrose, "of his tears, but not of his satisfaction." (*i*) And a paralytic hears the following address; "Be of good cheer: thy sins be forgiven thee;" (*k*) no punishment is inflicted. All the absolutions which are mentioned in the Scripture, are described as gratuitous. A general rule ought rather to be deduced from these numerous examples, than from that single case which is attended with peculiar circumstances.

XXXVI. When Daniel exhorted Nebuchadnezzar to "break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor," (*l*) he meant not to intimate that righteousness and mercy propitiate God and atone for sins; for God forbid that there should ever be any other redemption than the blood of Christ. But he used the term *break off* with reference to men, rather than to God; as though he had said, "Thou hast exercised, O king, an unrighteous and violent despotism; thou hast oppressed the weak; thou hast plundered the poor; thou hast treated thy people with harshness and iniquity; instead of unjust exactions, instead of violence and oppression, now substitute mercy and righteousness." In a similar sense Solomon says, that "love covereth all sins;" not with reference to God, but among men. For the whole verse is as follows: "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins." (*m*) In which verse, he, according to his usual custom, contrasts the evils arising from hatred with the fruits of love; signifying, that they who hate each other, reciprocally harass, criminate, reproach, revile, and convert every thing into a fault: but that they who love one another, mutually conceal, connive at, and reciprocally forgive many things among themselves; not that they approve each other's faults, but bear with them, and heal them by admonition, rather than aggravate them by invectives. Nor can we doubt that Peter intended the same in his citation of this passage, (*n*) unless we mean to accuse him of corrupting, and craftily perverting the Scriptures. When Solomon says, that "by mercy and truth iniquity is purged," (*o*) he intends not a

(*h*) Luke xviii. 14.(*i*) Luke xxii. 62.(*k*) Matt. ix. 2.(*l*) Dan. iv. 27.(*m*) Prov. x. 12.(*n*) 1 Peter iv. 8.(*o*) Prov. xvi. 6.

compensation in the Divine view, so that God, being appeased with such a satisfaction, remits the punishment which he would otherwise have inflicted; but, in the familiar manner of Scripture, he signifies, that they shall find him propitious to them who have forsaken their former vices and iniquities, and are converted to him in piety and truth; as though he had said, that the wrath of God subsides, and his judgment ceases, when we cease from our sins. He describes not the cause of pardon, but the mode of true conversion. Just as the prophets frequently declare, that it is in vain for hypocrites to offer to God ostentatious ceremonies instead of repentance, since he is only pleased with integrity and the duties of charity; and as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, when he recommends us “to do good and to communicate,” informs us that “with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” (*p*) And when Christ ridicules the Pharisees for having attended only to the cleansing of dishes, and neglected all purity of heart, and commands them to give alms, that all might be clean, (*q*) he is not exhorting them to make a satisfaction, but only teaching them what kind of purity obtains the Divine approbation. But of this expression we have treated in another work.*

XXXVII. With respect to the passage of Luke, (*r*) no one, who has read with a sound judgment the parable the Lord there proposes, will enter into any controversy with us concerning it. The Pharisee thought within himself, that the Lord did not know the woman, whom he had so easily admitted to his presence. For he imagined that Christ would not have admitted her, if he had known what kind of a sinner she was. And thence he inferred that Christ, who was capable of being so deceived, was not a prophet. To shew that she was not a sinner, her sins having already been forgiven, the Lord proposed this parable: “There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. He frankly forgave them both. Which of them will love him most?” The Pharisee answered, “He to whom he forgave most.” The Lord rejoins, Hence know that “this woman’s

(*p*) Heb. xiii. 16.(*q*) Luke xi. 39—41.(*r*) Luke vii. 39.

* In Harm. Evang.

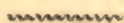
sins, which are many, are forgiven: for she loved much." In these words, you see, he makes her love, not the cause of the remission of her sins, but the proof of it. For they are taken from a comparison of that debtor to whom five hundred pence had been forgiven, of whom it is said, not that his debt was forgiven, because he had loved much, but that he loved much because his debt had been forgiven. And this similitude may be applied to the case of the woman in the following manner: "You suppose this woman to be a sinner; but you ought to know that she is not such, since her sins are forgiven her. And her love ought to convince you of the remission of her sins, by the grateful return she makes for this blessing." It is an *argumentum a posteriori*, by which any thing is proved from its consequences. By what means she obtained remission of sins, the Lord plainly declares: "Thy faith," says he, "hath saved thee." By faith therefore we obtain remission, by love we give thanks and declare the goodness of the Lord.

XXXVIII. To those things which frequently occur in the works of the Fathers concerning *satisfaction*, I pay little regard. I see, indeed, that some of them, or, to speak plainly, almost all whose writings are extant, have either erred on this point, or expressed themselves too harshly. But I shall not admit that they were so ignorant and inexperienced, as to write those things in the sense in which they are understood by the modern advocates for satisfaction. Chrysostom somewhere expresses himself thus: "Where mercy is requested, examination ceases; where mercy is implored, judgment is not severe; where mercy is sought, there is no room for punishment; where there is mercy, there is no inquiry; where mercy is, the answer is forgiven." These expressions, however they may be distorted, can never be reconciled with the dogmas of the Schools. In the treatise, *On Ecclesiastical Doctrines*, which is ascribed to Augustine, we read the following passage: "The satisfaction of repentance is to cut off the causes of sins, and not to indulge an entrance to their suggestions." Whence it appears, that even in those times the doctrine of satisfaction, as a compensation for sins committed, was universally rejected, since he refers all satisfaction to a cautious abstinence from sins in future. I will not quote what is farther asserted by Chry-

sostom, that the Lord requires of us nothing more than to confess our sins before him with tears; for passages of this kind frequently occur in his writings, and in those of other Fathers. Augustine somewhere calls works of mercy "remedies for obtaining remission of sins;" but lest any one should stumble at that expression, he explains himself more fully in another place. "The flesh of Christ," says he, "is the true and sole sacrifice for sins, not only for those which are all obliterated in baptism, but also for those which afterwards creep in through infirmity; on account of which the whole Church at present exclaims, Forgive us our debts; (s) and they are forgiven through that single sacrifice."

XXXIX. But they most commonly used the word "satisfaction," to signify, not a compensation rendered to God, but a public testification, by which those who had been punished with excommunication, when they wished to be readmitted to communion, gave the Church an assurance of their repentance. For there were enjoined on those penitents certain fastings, and other observances, by which they might prove themselves truly and cordially weary of their former life, or rather obliterate the memory of their past actions; and thus they were said to make satisfaction, not to God, but to the Church. This is also expressed by Augustine in these very words, in his *Enchiridion ad Laurentium*. From that ancient custom have originated the confessions and satisfactions which are used in the present age. But they retain not even the shadow of that original form. I know that the Fathers sometimes express themselves rather harshly; nor do I deny, what I have just asserted, that perhaps they have erred. But their writings, which were only besprinkled with a few spots, after they have been handled by such foul hands, became thoroughly soiled. And if we must contend with the authority of Fathers, what Fathers do they obtrude upon us? Most of those passages, of which Lombard, their champion, has compiled his heterogeneous collection, are extracted from the insipid reveries of some monks, which are circulated under the names of Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Chrysostom. Thus, on the present argument, he borrows

almost every thing from a Treatise on Repentance, which is a ridiculous selection from various authors, good and bad; it bears the name of Augustine indeed, but no man even of moderate learning can deign to admit it as really his. For not entering into a more particular examination of their absurdities, I request the pardon of the reader, whom I wish to spare that trouble. It would be both easy and plausible for me to expose to the greatest contempt, what they have heretofore celebrated as mysteries; but I forbear, as my object is to write what may tend to edification.



CHAPTER V.

The Supplements to their Doctrine of Satisfaction, Indulgences, and Purgatory.

THIS doctrine of *satisfaction* has given rise to *indulgences*. For by indulgences they pretend, that the deficiency of our abilities to make satisfaction is supplied, and even proceed to the extravagance of defining them to be the dispensation of the merits of Christ and of the saints, which the Pope distributes in his bulls. Now, though such persons are fitter subjects for medicines than for arguments, so that it would be of little use to engage in refuting errors so frivolous, which have been shaken by many attacks, and begin of themselves to grow obsolete, and totter towards a fall; yet as a brief refutation will be useful to some minds hitherto uninformed on the subject, I shall not altogether omit it. And indeed the establishment and long continuance of indulgences, with the unlimited influence retained by them amidst such outrageous and furious licentiousness, may serve to convince us in what a deep night of errors men were immersed for several ages. They saw, that they were themselves objects of the public and undissembled ridicule of the Pope and the dispensers of his bulls; that lucrative bargains were made concerning the salvation of their souls; that the price of salvation was fixed at a trifling sum of money,

and nothing presented gratuitously; that under this pretext, contributions were extorted from them, which were vilely consumed on brothels, pimps, and revellings; that the greatest advocates of indulgences were the greatest despisers of them; that this monster was daily making longer strides in licentious power and luxury, and that there was no end, that more trash was continually produced, and more money continually extorted. Yet they received indulgences with the greatest veneration, adored them and purchased them; and those who had more discernment than others, yet considered them as pious frauds, by which they might be deceived with some advantage. At length, since the world has permitted itself to recover a little the exercise of reason, indulgences become more and more discredited, till they altogether disappear.

II. But since many, who see the pollution, imposture, robbery, and rapacity, with which the dispensers of indulgences have hitherto amused themselves and cajoled us, do not perceive the fountain of all this impiety; it will be necessary to shew, not only the nature of indulgences as commonly used, but what they are in themselves when abstracted from every adventitious blemish. The merits of Christ and of the holy apostles and martyrs, they style "the treasury of the Church." The principal custody of this repository they pretend to have been delivered, as I have already hinted, to the bishop of Rome; who has the dispensation of such great benefits, so that he can both bestow them himself, and delegate the power of bestowing them to others. Hence from the Pope are received sometimes plenary indulgences, sometimes indulgences for a certain number of years; from Cardinals, for a hundred days; from Bishops, for forty days. But to describe them correctly, they are a profanation of the blood of Christ, and a delusion of Satan, by which they seduce Christians from the grace of God and the life which is in Christ, and turn them aside from the right way of salvation. For how could the blood of Christ be more basely profaned, than when it is denied to be sufficient for the remission of sins, for reconciliation and satisfaction, unless its deficiency be supplied from some other quarter? "To him," says Peter, "give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission

of sins.” (t) Indulgences dispense remission of sins through Peter, and Paul, and the martyrs. “The blood of Jesus Christ,” says John, “cleanseth us from all sin.” (u) Indulgences make the blood of the martyrs the ablution of sins. Paul says, that Christ, “who knew no sin, was made sin for us;” that is, a satisfaction for sin, “that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (w) Indulgences place satisfaction for sins in the blood of the martyrs. Paul declared to the Corinthians, that Christ alone was crucified and died for them. (x) Indulgences pronounce that Paul and others died for us. In another place he says, that Christ “hath purchased the Church with his own blood.” (y) Indulgences assign another price of this purchase, in the blood of the martyrs. The apostle says, that “by one offering Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (z) Indulgences, on the contrary, proclaim that sanctification, which were otherwise insufficient, receives its perfection from the martyrs. John declares that all saints “have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.” (a) Indulgences teach us to wash our robes in the blood of the saints.

III. Leo, bishop of Rome, excellently opposes these sacrilegious pretensions in his epistle to the Bishops of Palestine. “Although the death of many saints,” he says, “has been precious in the sight of the Lord, yet the murder of no innocent person has been the propitiation of the world. The righteous have received, not bestowed, crowns; and from the fortitude of the faithful have arisen examples of patience, not gifts of righteousness. For their deaths have been all singular, nor has any one by his death discharged the debt of another; for it is the Lord Christ alone, in whom all are crucified, dead, buried, and raised from the dead.” This passage being worthy of remembrance, he repeats it in another place. Surely nothing clearer can be desired, in confutation of this impious doctrine of indulgences. And Augustine expresses himself with equal propriety to the same purpose. He says; “Although we die, brethren for brethren, yet the blood of no martyr is ever shed for the remission of sins. Christ has done this for us; and in doing it has not given an example in which we should imitate

(t) Acts x. 43. (u) 1 John i. 7. (w) 2 Cor. v. 21. (x) 1 Cor. i. 13.
 (y) Acts xx. 28. (z) Heb. x. 14. (a) Rev. vii. 14.

him, but conferred a favour for which we should thank him." Again in another place; "As the Son of God alone became the Son of man, to make us with himself sons of God; so he alone without any demerits sustained the punishment for us, that we without any merits might through him obtain undeserved grace." Indeed, whilst their whole doctrine is a compound of horrible sacrilege and blasphemies, yet this is a blasphemy more monstrous than the rest. Let them acknowledge whether these be not their opinions, that the martyrs have by their death performed for God, and merited from him, more than was necessary for themselves; that they had so great a redundancy of merits, as to superabound to others; that therefore, lest so great a blessing should be superfluous, their blood is commingled with the blood of Christ, and that of both these is formed the treasury of the Church for the remission and expiation of sins; and that in this sense we ought to understand the declaration of Paul, "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the Church." (b) What is this but leaving Christ a mere name, and in other respects making him an inferior saint of the common order, scarcely distinguishable among the multitude? He alone ought to have been preached, he alone exhibited, he alone mentioned, he alone regarded, in all discourses on the procurement of remission of sins, expiation, and sanctification. But let us hear their grand argument: That the blood of the martyrs may not be shed in vain, let it be applied to the common benefit of the Church. Indeed? Was it no advantage to glorify God by their death? to subscribe to his truth with their blood? to testify by their contempt of the present life, that they sought a better one? by their constancy, to confirm the faith of the Church, and vanquish the obstinacy of their enemies? But this is the fact: they acknowledge no benefit, if Christ alone be the propitiator, if he alone died for our sins, if he alone was offered for our redemption. Peter and Paul, they say, might nevertheless have obtained the crown of victory, if they had expired in their beds. Whereas they contended even to blood it would be incompatible with the justice of God to leave thi

barren or unfruitful. As if God knew not how to augment the glory of his servants according to the extent of his gifts. But the Church in general receives an advantage sufficiently great, when by their triumphs it is inflamed with the same zeal for similar exertions and conflicts.

IV. But how maliciously they pervert that passage of Paul, where he says, "that he fills up in his own flesh that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ!" (c) For he refers that deficiency and supplement, not to the work of redemption, satisfaction, or expiation; but to those afflictions with which the members of Christ, even all the faithful, must necessarily be exercised as long as they live in the present state. He says, therefore, that this remains of the afflictions of Christ, that having once suffered in himself, he daily suffers in his members. Christ honours us so far as to consider our afflictions as his. When Paul adds that he suffered "for the Church," he means not for the redemption, reconciliation, or atonement of the Church, but for its edification and profit. As in another place he says: "I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus." (d) He writes to the Corinthians, that whatever tribulations he endured, he was "afflicted for their consolation and salvation." (e) And he immediately proceeds to explain himself, by adding, that he was made a minister of the Church, not for its redemption, but according to the dispensation which had been committed to him, to preach the Gospel of Christ. (f) But if they require also another expositor, let them attend to Augustine: "The sufferings of Christ," says he, "are in Christ alone, as in the head; in Christ and the Church, as in the whole body. Whence Paul, one of the members, says, I fill up in my flesh that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ. If you therefore, whoever you are that read this, are one of the members of Christ, all that you suffer from such as are not members of Christ, was behind in the afflictions of Christ." But the tendency of the sufferings of the apostles, sustained on account of the Church, are stated by him in another place: "Christ is my door to you; because you are the sheep of Christ, purchased with his blood: acknowledge your price, which is not given by

(c) Col. i. 24.

(d) 2 Tim. ii. 10.

(e) 2 Cor. i. 6.

(f) Col. i. 25.

me, but preached by me." Then he adds, "As he hath laid down his life, so we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren, for the establishment of peace and the confirmation of faith." This is the language of Augustine. But let it not be imagined, that Paul thought there was any deficiency in the sufferings of Christ, with respect to all the plenitude of righteousness, salvation, and life; or that any addition to them was intended by him, who so clearly and magnificently proclaims, that the "abundance of grace by Christ," was poured forth with such liberality, that it "much more abounded" beyond all the aboundings of sin. (*g*) It is not by the merit of their own life or death, but by this grace alone that all the saints have been saved, as Peter expressly testifies: (*h*) so that he would be guilty of an injurious contempt of God and of his Christ, who should place the worthiness of any saint in any thing else but the mere mercy of God. But why do I dwell any longer on this subject, as though it were still involved in obscurity, whereas the statement of such monstrous notions is of itself a complete refutation of them?

V. Now, to pass from such abominations, who taught the Pope to enclose in lead and parchment the grace of Jesus Christ, which the Lord designed to be dispensed by the word of the Gospel? Either the Gospel of God must be false, or their indulgences fallacious. For that Christ is offered to us in the Gospel, with all his plenitude of heavenly blessings, with all his merits, with all his righteousness, wisdom, and grace, without any exception, is testified by Paul, when he says, "God hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for God, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (*i*) And believers know the meaning of that "fellowship of Christ," (*k*) which according to the testimony of the same apostle, is offered to our enjoyment in the Gospel. Indulgences, on the contrary, produce a certain allowance of grace from the Pope's repository, fix it to lead and parchment, and even to a par-

(*g*) Rom. v. 17—20. (*h*) Acts xv. 11. (*i*) 2 Cor. v. 18, &c. (*k*) 1 Cor. i. 9.

ticular place, and separate it from the word of God. Now if any one inquire the origin of this abuse, it seems to have arisen from an ancient custom, that when more severe satisfactions were imposed on penitents than could possibly be borne by all, they who felt themselves oppressed beyond measure, petitioned the Church for some relaxation of rigour. The remission granted to such persons was called indulgence. But when they transferred satisfactions to God, and said that they were compensations, by which men might redeem themselves from the judgment of God, they also converted these indulgences into expiatory remedies, to deliver us from deserved punishments. But the blasphemies which we have mentioned have been fabricated with such consummate impudence, that they have not even the least appearance of plausibility.

VI. Nor let them now trouble us any more about their purgatory, since it is utterly demolished by this argument. For I cannot coincide with some, who think it best to be silent on this point, and to omit the mention of purgatory, from which, they say, many sharp contentions arise, but very little edification results. Indeed, I should myself be of opinion that such trifles are unworthy of notice, if they did not consider them as matters of importance. But since purgatory has been erected with a multitude of blasphemies, and is daily propped by new ones, and since it excites many and grievous offences, it really must not pass without notice. It might be possible for a time to conceal that it was a fiction of curious and presumptuous temerity, unsupported by the word of God; that it was accredited by I know not what revelation invented by the subtlety of Satan; that for its confirmation some passages of Scripture were absurdly perverted. The Lord, however, suffers not human presumption thus violently to break into the hidden recesses of his judgment; (1) and hath severely prohibited the neglect of his word and the inquiry after truth among the dead; and does not permit his word to be thus irreverently dishonoured. Nevertheless, admitting that all these things might, for a short time, have been tolerated, as matters of small importance; yet when expiation of sins is sought any where but in the blood of

(1) Deut. xviii. 10—12.

Christ, when satisfaction is transferred to any other, silence becomes dangerous in the extreme. Therefore, we should exclaim with all our might, that purgatory is a pernicious fiction of Satan, that it makes void the cross of Christ, that it intolerably insults the Divine mercy, and weakens and overturns our faith. For what is their purgatory, but a satisfaction for sins paid after death by the souls of the deceased? Thus the notion of satisfaction being overthrown, purgatory itself is immediately subverted from its very foundations. But if it has been fully evinced, that the blood of Christ is the only satisfaction, expiation, and purgation for the sins of the faithful; what is the necessary inference, but that purgatory is nothing but a horrible blasphemy against Christ? I pass by the sacrilegious pretences with which it is daily defended, the offences which it produces in religion, and the other innumerable evils which we perceive to have proceeded from such a source of impiety.

VII. It is worth while, however, to wrest out of their hands those passages of Scripture, which they have falsely and corruptly pressed into their service. The assertion of the Lord, that the sin against the Holy Ghost "shall not forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come," (*m*) implies, they say, that there is a forgiveness of some sins in the world to come. But who does not see, that the Lord there speaks of the guilt of sin? And if this be the case, what has it to do with their purgatory, for there they suppose punishment to be inflicted for sins, the guilt of which they do not deny to have been forgiven in the present life? But to prevent all farther cavils, they shall have a plainer answer. When the Lord intended to cut off such flagitious iniquity from all hope of pardon, he thought it not sufficient to say that it should never be forgiven; and for the sake of farther amplification he adopted a distinction, comprehending both the judgment which the conscience of every individual feels in this life, and that final judgment which will be publicly held at the resurrection: as though he had said, "Beware of malicious rebellion, as of immediate perdition; for he who shall have purposely endeavoured to extinguish the offered light of the Spirit, shall never obtain

pardon, neither in this life which is allotted to sinners for their conversion, nor in the last day when the lambs shall be separated from the goats by the angels of God, and the kingdom of heaven shall be purged from every offence." They next adduce this parable from Matthew: "Agree with thine adversary; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." (*n*) If in this place the judge signify God, the adversary the devil, the officer an angel, the prison purgatory, I will readily submit to them. But if it be evident to every one, that Christ there intended to shew, to how many dangers and calamities persons expose themselves, who prefer obstinately exerting the rigour of the law, to acting upon the principles of equity and kindness, in order the more earnestly to exhort his disciples to an equitable concord, pray, where will purgatory be found?

VIII. They derive an argument from the language of Paul, where he has affirmed, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." (*o*) For they assume it as granted, that "things (or persons) under the earth," cannot be understood of those who are consigned to eternal damnation. It follows, therefore, that they must be the souls suffering in purgatory. Their reasoning would not be very bad, if by genuflexion, the apostle designed truly pious worship; but since he simply teaches, that dominion is committed to Christ, by which all creatures must be subjugated; why may we not understand this phrase of the devils, who will indeed stand at the tribunal of the Lord, and acknowledge him as their judge with fear and trembling? As Paul himself elsewhere explains the same prophecy; "We shall all stand," says he, "before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me," &c. (*p*) But they reply, we cannot give the same kind of interpretation to this passage in the Revelation; "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them,

(*n*) Matt. v. 25.(*o*) Phil. ii. 10.(*p*) Rom. xiv. 10, 11.

heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." (q) This I readily concede; but what creatures do they suppose to be here enumerated? For it is very certain, that the expressions comprehend creatures both irrational and inanimate. It is a mere declaration that all the parts of the world, from the summit of the heavens to the centre of the earth, celebrate, in their respective ways, the glory of the Creator. What they produce from the history of the Maccabees, I shall not honour with an answer, that I may be not be supposed to place that work in the catalogue of sacred books. But Augustine, they say, received it as canonical. I inquire first, with what degree of credit did he receive 'it? He says, "The history of the Maccabees is not esteemed by the Jews, as the law, and the prophets, and the Psalms, to which the Lord gives a testimony, as being witnesses concerning him, saying, 'All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me.' (r) But it has been received by the Church, and not altogether unprofitably, if it be read or heard with sobriety," &c. Jerome without any scruple inculcates, that its authority is of no force in the support of doctrines. And from that old treatise on the exposition of the Creed, which is ascribed to Cyprian, it clearly appears that it was not admitted in the ancient Church. But why am I now contending to no purpose? as though the author himself did not sufficiently shew, what deference is due to him, when at the conclusion he begs pardon, if he should have spoken any thing improperly. Certainly he who confesses that his writings need pardon, proclaims them not to be the oracles of the Holy Spirit. Besides, the piety of Judas Maccabeus is commended on no other ground, but because he had a firm hope of the final resurrection, when he sent to Jerusalem an oblation for the dead. Nor does the historian represent this oblation as intended to be a price of redemption, but that those in whose names it was offered might be partakers of eternal life with the rest of the faithful who had died in defence of their country and religion. This action was accompanied indeed by superstition and preposterous zeal; but

(q) Rev. v. 13.

(r) Luke xxiv. 44.

they are more than infatuated who apply to us a sacrifice offered under the law; since we know, that all such ancient usages ceased at the advent of Christ.

IX. But they find in Paul an invincible argument, which cannot be so easily answered. "If any man," says he, "build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." (s) What can this be, they ask, but purgatorial fire, by which the pollution of sins is cleansed, that we may enter pure into the kingdom of God? But most of the Fathers were of a different opinion, understanding the word "fire" to mean tribulation, or the cross, by which the Lord tries his children, to purify them from all carnal pollution: and this is much more probable than the notion of purgatory. I cannot, however, coincide with them; for I think I have discovered a far more certain and lucid interpretation of this passage. But before I state it, I could wish them to answer this question; whether they suppose it was necessary for the apostles and all the saints to pass through this purgatorial fire. I know they will answer in the negative; for it were too absurd, that purification should be necessary to those whose redundant merits they vainly imagine to superabound to all the members of the Church. But the apostle affirms this; for he says, not that the work of some, but that the work of all, shall be proved. Nor is this my own argument, but Augustine's, who thus opposes the interpretation now adopted by our adversaries. And, which would be still more absurd, he says, not that they shall pass through the fire on account of any works, but that if they have edified the Church with perfect fidelity, they shall receive a reward, when their work shall have been tried by fire. In the first place, we see that the apostle uses a metaphor, when he calls doctrines of human invention "wood, hay, stubble." The reason of the metaphor also is evident; that as wood immediately on being placed in contact with fire, consumes and

wastes away, so neither will those doctrines be able to abide the test of examination. Now it is well known, that such an examination proceeds from the Spirit of God. Therefore, to pursue the thread of the metaphor, and to adapt the parts by a proper relation to each other, he gives the Holy Spirit's examination the appellation of *fire*. For as gold and silver afford a more certain proof of their goodness and purity, in proportion to their proximity to the fire; so Divine truth receives the stronger confirmation of its authority, in proportion to the strictness of spiritual examination by which it is investigated. As wood, hay, and stubble, brought into contact with fire, are speedily consumed; so the inventions of men, unsupported by the word of God, cannot bear the examination of the Holy Spirit, but must immediately fall to the ground. Finally, if false doctrines are compared to wood, hay, and stubble, because, like wood, hay, and stubble, they are consumed by fire and entirely destroyed, and if they are overcome only by the Spirit of the Lord; it follows, that the Spirit is that fire by which they will be proved. This trial Paul calls *the day*, or *the day of the Lord*, according to the common phraseology of Scripture. For that is called the day of the Lord, whenever he manifests his presence to men. Now we enjoy most of the light of his countenance, when we are favoured with the radiance of his truth. It has been evinced that Paul means no other fire than the examination of the Holy Spirit. But how are they saved by the fire, who suffer the loss of their work? This it will not be difficult to comprehend, if we consider of what class of men he is speaking. For he characterizes them as builders of the Church, who retain their legitimate foundation, but raise the superstructure of unequal materials; they are such, as do not deviate from the principal and essential articles of the faith, but err in inferior and less important ones, mixing their own inventions with the word of God. Such, I say, must suffer the loss of their work, by their inventions being destroyed: but they are themselves saved, yet so as by fire; that is, not because their ignorance and error can be approved by the Lord, but because they are purified from them by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. Wherefore, whoever have corrupted the pure gold of the Divine word with this filth of purgatory, must necessarily suffer the loss of their work.

X. Our opponents will reply, that it has been a very ancient opinion in the Church. Paul removes this objection when he comprehends even his own age in this sentence, where he denounces, that all must suffer the loss of their work, who in the structure of the Church should place any thing not corresponding to the foundation. When our adversaries therefore object to me, that to offer prayers for the dead has been the practice of more than thirteen hundred years; I inquire of them, on the contrary, by what word of God, by what revelation, by what example, it is sanctioned. For they are not only destitute of any testimonies of Scripture in favour of it, but none of the examples of the saints there recorded exhibit any thing like it. Respecting mourning and funeral offices, it contains many and sometimes long accounts; but of prayers for persons deceased, you cannot discover the smallest hint. But the greater the importance of the subject, so much the rather ought it to have been particularly mentioned. Even the Fathers themselves, who offered up prayers for the dead, saw that they had neither a Divine command, nor a legitimate example, to justify the practice. Why then did they presume to adopt it? In this, I say, they discovered themselves to be but men; and therefore I contend, that what they did ought not to be enforced for the imitation of others. For since the faithful ought not to undertake any thing, without an assurance of conscience, according to the direction of Paul, (†) this assurance is chiefly requisite in prayer. Yet it will be urged, It is probable that they were impelled to it by some reason. I reply, Perhaps they sought some consolation to alleviate their sorrow, and it might appear inhuman not to give some testimony of their love towards the dead in the presence of God. The propensity of the human mind to this affection, all men know by experience. The custom also, when received, was like a flame, kindling ardour in the minds of multitudes. We know that funeral rites have been performed to the dead among all nations, and in every age, and that lustrations have been annually made for their departed spirits. For though Satan has deluded foolish mortals with these fallacies, yet he has borrowed the occasion of the deception from a

(†) Rom. xiv. 23.

true principle; that death is not an annihilation, but a transition from this life into another. Nor can it be doubted, but that even superstition itself convicts the heathens before the tribunal of God, for neglecting all the concerns of a future life, which they professed to believe. Now Christians, because they would not be inferior to heathens, were ashamed to perform no services for the dead, as though they had wholly ceased to exist. Hence that inconsiderate officiousness; because if they were negligent in attending to funerals, feasts, and oblations, they were afraid they should expose themselves to great disgrace. What first proceeded from a perverse emulation, has been so repeatedly augmented by novel additions, that the principal sanctity of Popery consists in relieving the distresses of the dead. But the Scripture administers another consolation, far better and more substantial, when it declares that "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord;" and adds as a reason, "that they may rest from their labours." (u) Now we ought not to indulge our own affection so far as to introduce a corrupt method of praying into the Church. Certainly, he that has but a moderate share of penetration, will easily discover all that we find on this subject in the Fathers to have been in compliance with general practice and vulgar ignorance. I confess, they were also involved in the error themselves, from an inconsiderate credulity, which frequently deprives the human mind of its judgment. But in the mean time, the mere reading of them demonstrates with what hesitation they recommend prayers for the dead. Augustine, in his Book of Confessions, relates, that Monica, his mother, had vehemently entreated to be remembered in the celebration of the mysteries at the altar. This was the wish of an old woman, which her son did not examine by the standard of Scripture; but from his natural affection for her, wished it to gain the approbation of others. But the treatise composed by him, on care for the dead, contains so many hesitations, that it ought by its coolness to extinguish the heat of imprudent zeal: if any one desires to be an intercessor for the dead, this treatise, with its frigid probabilities, will certainly remove all the solicitude he may have

(u) Rev. xiv. 13.

previously experienced. For this is its only support, that since it has been customary to pray for the dead, it is a duty not to be despised. But though I concede, that the ancient writers of the Church esteemed it a pious act to pray for the dead, yet we must always remember a rule, which can never deceive, that it is not right for us in our prayers to introduce any thing of our own, but that our desires must be submitted to the word of God; because he chooses to prescribe what he designs we should ask. Now since there is not a syllable in all the law or the gospel, which allows us to pray for the dead, it is a profane abuse of the name of God, to attempt more than he enjoins. But that our adversaries may not glory, as though the ancient Church were associated with them in their error, I assert that there is a considerable difference between them. The ancients preserved the memory of the dead, that they might not seem to have cast off all concern for them; but they at the same time confessed their uncertainty concerning their state. Respecting purgatory they asserted nothing, but considered it as quite uncertain. The moderns expect their reveries concerning purgatory to be admitted as unquestionable articles of faith. The Fathers, in the communion of the sacred supper, merely recommended their deceased friends to the mercy of God. The Papists are incessantly urging a concern for the dead; and by their importunate declamations, cause it to be preferred to all the duties of charity. Besides, it would not be difficult for us to produce some testimonies from the Fathers, which manifestly overthrow all those prayers for the dead which were then used. Such is this of Augustine; when he teaches that all men expect the resurrection of the body and eternal glory, and that every individual enters on the fruition of that rest which follows after death, if he is worthy of it when he dies. Therefore, he declares that all the pious, as well as the prophets, apostles, and martyrs, enjoy a blessed repose immediately after death. If such be their condition, what advantage will our prayers confer on them? I pass over those grosser superstitions, with which they have fascinated the minds of the simple: which nevertheless are so innumerable, and for the most part so monstrous, that they cannot be varnished over by any honest pretext. I omit also that most disgraceful traffic, which

they licentiously carried on while the world was in such a state of stupidity. For, not only should I never arrive at a conclusion, but I have already furnished the pious reader with sufficient to establish his conscience.



CHAPTER VI.

The Life of a Christian. Scriptural Arguments and Exhortations to it.

WE have said, that the end of regeneration is, that the life of the faithful may exhibit a symmetry and agreement between the righteousness of God and their obedience; and that thus they may confirm the adoption by which they are accepted as his children. But though this law of God comprehends that newness of life by which his image is restored in us; yet since our tardiness needs much stimulation and assistance, it will be useful to collect from various places of Scripture, a rule for the reformation of the life, that they who cordially repent may not be bewildered in their pursuits. Now, when I undertake the regulation of a Christian's life, I know that I am entering on an argument various and copious, and the magnitude of which might fill a large volume, if I designed a complete discussion of every part of it. For we see to what great prolixity the Fathers have extended the exhortations composed by them only on single virtues; and that without any excessive loquacity: for whatever virtue it is intended to recommend in an oration, the copiousness of the matter naturally produces such a diffusiveness of style, that unless you have spoken largely, you seem not to have done justice to the subject. But my design is not to extend the plan of life, which I am now about to deliver, so far as particularly to discourse on each distinct virtue and expatiate into exhortations. These things may be sought in the writings of others, especially in the homilies of the Fathers. It will be sufficient for me if I point out a method, by which a pious man may be conducted to the right end in the regulation

of his life, and briefly assign a universal rule, by which he may properly estimate his duties. There will, perhaps, at some future period be a suitable opportunity for declamations; or I shall leave to others an office for which I am not calculated. I am naturally fond of brevity; and, perhaps, were I desirous of speaking in a more copious manner, I should not succeed. And if a more prolix method of teaching were most acceptable, yet I should scarcely be inclined to make the trial. The plan of the present work, however, requires me to treat a simple doctrine with all possible brevity. As the philosophers have certain principles of rectitude and honour, whence they deduce particular duties and the whole circle of virtues; so the Scripture is not without its order in this respect, but maintains an economy superlatively beautiful, and far more certain, than all the systems of the philosophers. There is only this difference, that the philosophers, being ambitious men, they have sedulously affected an exquisite perspicuity of method, in order to make an ostentatious display of their ingenious dexterity. But the Spirit, whose teaching is void of affectation, has not so exactly or perpetually observed a methodical plan; which nevertheless, by using it in some places, he sufficiently indicates ought not to be neglected by us.

II. This Scripture plan, of which we are now treating, consists chiefly in these two things. The first, that a love of righteousness, to which we have otherwise no natural propensity, be instilled and introduced into our hearts: the second, that a rule be prescribed to us, to prevent our taking any devious steps in the race of righteousness. Now in the recommendation of righteousness, it uses a great number of very excellent arguments, many of which we have before noticed on different occasions, and some we shall briefly touch on in this place. With what better foundation can it begin, than when it admonishes us that we ought to be holy, because *our God is holy?* (*iv*) For when we were dispersed like scattered sheep and lost in the labyrinth of the world, he gathered us together again, that he might associate us to himself. When we hear any mention of our union with God, we should remember, that holiness must be the bond of it: not that we attain communion with him by

the merit of holiness, (since it is rather necessary for us in the first place to adhere to him, in order that, being endued with his holiness, we may follow whither he calls) but because it is a peculiar property of his glory, not to have any intercourse with iniquity and uncleanness. Wherefore also it teaches, that this is the end of our vocation, which it is requisite for us always to keep in view, if we desire to correspond to the design of God in calling us. For to what purpose was it that we were delivered from the iniquity and pollution of the world, in which we had been immersed, if we permit ourselves to wallow in them as long as we live? Besides, it also admonishes us that, to be numbered among the people of God, we must inhabit the holy city Jerusalem; (x) which, he having consecrated it to himself, cannot without impiety be profaned by impure inhabitants. Whence these expressions: "He shall abide in the tabernacle of the Lord, that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness," &c. (y) because it is very unbecoming the sanctuary which he inhabits, to be rendered as filthy as a stable.

III. And as a farther incitement to us, it shews, that as God the Father hath reconciled us to himself in Christ, so he hath impressed in him an image, to which it is his will that we should be conformed. (z) Now let those who are of opinion that the philosophers have the only just and orderly systems of moral philosophy, shew me in any of their works, a more excellent economy than that which I have stated. When they intend to exhort us to the sublimest virtue, they advance no argument, but that we ought to live agreeably to nature: but the Scripture deduces its exhortation from the true source, when it not only enjoins us to refer our life to God the author of it, to whom it belongs; but after having taught us, that we are degenerated from the original state in which we were created, adds, that Christ, by whom we have been reconciled to God, is proposed to us as an example, whose character we should exhibit in our lives. What can be required more efficacious than this one consideration? indeed what can be required besides? For if the Lord has adopted us as his sons on this condition, that we exhibit in our life an imitation of Christ the

(x) Isaiah xxxv. 10. (y) Psalm xv. 1, 2. xxiv. 3, 4. (z) Rom. vi. 4, &c. viii. 29.

bond of our adoption; unless we addict and devote ourselves to righteousness, we not only most perfidiously revolt from our Creator, but also abjure him as our Saviour. The Scripture derives matter of exhortation from all the blessings of God which it celebrates to us, and from all the parts of our salvation. It argues, that since God hath discovered himself as a Father to us, we must be convicted of the basest ingratitude, unless we on our part manifest ourselves to be his children; that since Christ hath purified us in the laver of his blood, and hath communicated this purification by baptism, it does not become us to be defiled with fresh pollution; that since he hath united us to his body, we should, as his members, solicitously beware lest we asperse ourselves with any blemish or disgrace; that since he who is our head hath ascended to heaven, we ought to divest ourselves of all terrestrial affection, and aspire thither with all our soul; that the since the Holy Spirit hath dedicated us as temples to God, we should use our utmost exertions, that the glory of God may be displayed by us; that we ought not to commit any thing which may profane us with the pollution of sin; that since both our soul and our body are destined to heavenly incorruption and a never-fading crown, we ought to exert our most strenuous efforts to preserve them pure and uncorrupt till the day of the Lord. These, I say, are the best foundations for the proper regulation of the life, such as we cannot find in the philosophers; who in the recommendation of virtue, never rise above the natural dignity of man.

IV. This is a proper place to address those, who have nothing but the name and the symbol of Christ, and yet would be denominated Christians. But with what face do they glory in his sacred name? For none have any intercourse with Christ, but those who have received the true knowledge of him from the word of the Gospel. Now the apostle denies that any have rightly learned Christ, who have not been taught that they must put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and put on Christ. (a) Their knowledge of Christ, then, is proved to be a false and injurious pretence, with whatever eloquence and volubility they may talk concern-

(a) Eph. iv. 20, &c.

ing the Gospel. For it is a doctrine not of the tongue, but of the life; and is not apprehended merely with the understanding and memory like other sciences, but is then only received, when it possesses the whole soul, and finds a seat and residence in the inmost affection of the heart. Let them, therefore, either cease to insult God by boasting themselves to be what they are not, or shew themselves disciples not unworthy of Christ their master. We have allotted the first place to the doctrine which contains our religion; because it is the origin of our salvation: but that it may not be unprofitable to us, it must be transfused into our breast, pervade our manners, and thus transform us into itself. If the philosophers are justly incensed against, and banish with disgrace from their society those who, while they profess an art which ought to be a rule of life, convert it into a sophistical loquacity; with how much better reason may we detest those sophists who are contented to have the Gospel on their lips, whilst its efficacy ought to penetrate the inmost affections of the heart, to dwell in the soul, and to affect the whole man, with a hundred times more energy than the frigid exhortations of the philosophers?

V. Yet I would not insist upon it as absolutely necessary, that the manners of a Christian should breathe nothing but the perfect gospel: which nevertheless ought both to be wished and to be aimed at. But I do not so rigorously require evangelical perfection, as not to acknowledge as a Christian, one who has not yet attained to it: for then all would be excluded from the Church: since no man can be found who is not still at a great distance from it: and many have hitherto made but a very small progress, whom it would nevertheless be unjust to reject. What then? let us set before our eyes that mark, to which alone our pursuit must be directed. Let that be prescribed as the goal towards which we must earnestly tend. For it is not lawful for you to make such a compromise with God, as to undertake a part of the duties prescribed to you in his word, and to omit part of them at your own pleasure. For in the first place, he every where recommends integrity as a principal branch of his worship; by which he intends a sincere simplicity of heart, free from all guile and falsehood; the opposite of which is a double heart: as though it had been said, that the beginning of

a life of uprightness is spiritual, when the internal affection of the mind is unfeignedly devoted to God in the cultivation of holiness and righteousness. But since no man in this terrestrial and corporeal prison has strength sufficient to press forward in his course with a due degree of alacrity, and the majority are oppressed with such great debility, that they stagger and halt, and even creep on the ground, and so make very inconsiderable advances; let us every one proceed according to our small ability, and prosecute the journey we have begun. No man will be so unhappy, but that he may every day make some progress, however small. Therefore let us not cease to do this, that we may be incessantly advancing in the way of the Lord: nor let us despair on account of the smallness of our success: for however our success may not correspond to our wishes, yet our labour is not lost, when this day surpasses the preceding one: provided that, with sincere simplicity, we keep our end in view, and press forward to the goal, not practising self-adulation, nor indulging our own evil propensities, but perpetually exerting our endeavours after increasing degrees of amelioration, till we shall have arrived at a perfection of goodness: which indeed we seek and pursue as long as we live, and shall then attain when, divested of all corporeal infirmity, we shall be admitted by God into complete communion with him.



CHAPTER VII.

Summary of the Christian Life. Self-denial.

ALTHOUGH the Divine law contains a most excellent and well-arranged plan for the regulation of life, yet it has pleased the heavenly Teacher to conform men by a more accurate doctrine to the rule which he had prescribed in the law. And the principle of that doctrine is this; that it is the duty of the faithful to “present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable

unto God;" (b) and that in this consists the legitimate worship of him. Hence is deduced an argument for exhorting them; "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that will of God." This is a very important consideration, that we are consecrated and dedicated to God; that we may not hereafter think, speak, meditate, or do any thing but with a view to his glory. For that which is sacred cannot, without great injustice towards him, be applied to unholy uses. If we are not our own, but the Lord's, it is manifest, both what error we must avoid, and to what end all the actions of our lives are to be directed. We are not our own; therefore, neither our reason nor our will should predominate in our deliberations and actions. We are not our own; therefore let us not propose it as our end, to seek what may be expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own; therefore let us, as far as possible, forget ourselves and all things that are ours. On the contrary, we are God's; to him therefore let us live and die. We are God's; therefore let his wisdom and will preside in all our actions. We are God's; towards him therefore, as our only legitimate end, let every part of our lives be directed. O how great a proficiency has that man made, who having been taught that he is not his own, has taken the sovereignty and government of himself from his own reason, to surrender it to God! For as compliance with their own inclinations leads men most effectually to ruin, so to place no dependence on our own knowledge or will, but merely to follow the guidance of the Lord, is the only way of safety. Let this then be the first step, to depart from ourselves, that we may apply all the vigour of our faculties to the service of the Lord. By service I mean, not that only which consists in verbal obedience, but that by which the human mind, divested of its natural carnality, resigns itself wholly to the direction of the Divine Spirit. Of this transformation, which Paul styles a renovation of the mind, (c) though it is the first entrance into life, all the philosophers were ignorant. For they set up reason as the sole directress of man, they think that she is exclusively to be attended to, in short to her alone they assign the go-

(b) Rom. xii. 1. (c) Eph. iv. 23.

vernment of the conduct; but the Christian philosophy commands her to give place, and submit to the Holy Spirit; so that now the man himself lives not, but carries about Christ living and reigning within him. (d)

II. Hence also that other consequence, that we should seek not our own things, but those which are agreeable to the will of the Lord and conducive to the promotion of his glory. This also argues a great proficiency, that almost forgetting ourselves, and certainly neglecting all selfish regards, we endeavour faithfully to devote our attention to God and his commandments. For when the Scripture enjoins us to discard all private and selfish considerations, it not only erases from our minds the cupidity of wealth, the lust of power, and the favour of men; but also eradicates ambition and all appetite after human glory, with other more secret plagues. Indeed, a Christian man ought to be so composed and prepared, as to reflect that he has to do with God every moment of his life. Thus, as he will measure all his actions by his will and determination, so he will refer the whole bias of his mind religiously to him. For he who has learned to regard God in every undertaking, is also raised above every vain imagination. This is that denial of ourselves, which Christ from the commencement of his ministry so diligently enjoins on his disciples; which, when it has once obtained the government of the heart, leaves room neither for pride, haughtiness, or ostentation, nor for avarice, libidinousness, luxury, effeminacy, or any other evils which are the offspring of self-love. On the contrary, wherever it does not reign, there either the grossest vices are indulged without the least shame; or, if there exist any appearance of virtue, it is vitiated by a depraved passion for glory. Shew me, if you can, a single individual, who, unless he has renounced himself according to the command of the Lord, is voluntarily disposed to practise virtue among men. For all who have not been influenced by this disposition, have followed virtue merely from the love of praise. And even those of the philosophers who have ever contended, that virtue is desirable for its own sake, have been inflated with so much arrogance, that it is evident they desire virtue

for no other reason, than to furnish them occasion for the exercise of pride. But God is so far from being thus delighted, either with those who are ambitious of popular praise, or with hearts so full of pride and presumption, that he pronounces, "they have their reward" in this world, and represents harlots and publicans as nearer to the kingdom of heaven than such persons. But we have not yet clearly stated the number and magnitude of the obstacles, by which a man is impeded in the pursuit of that which is right, as long as he has refrained from all self-denial. For it is an ancient and true observation, that there is a world of vices concealed in the soul of man. Nor can you find any other remedy, than to deny yourself and discard all selfish considerations, and to devote your whole attention to the pursuit of those things which the Lord requires of you, and which ought to be pursued for this sole reason, because they are pleasing to him.

III. The same apostle in another place gives a more distinct, though a brief, representation of all the parts of a well-regulated life. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (e) For after having proposed the grace of God to animate us, in order to prepare the way for us truly to worship God, he removes two obstacles, which are our chief impediments; first, ungodliness, to which we have naturally too strong a propensity, and secondly, worldly lusts, which extend themselves farther. The term "ungodliness" not only denotes superstitions, but comprehends also every thing that is repugnant to the serious fear of God. And "worldly lusts" mean the carnal affections. Therefore he enjoins us, with reference to both tables of the law, to forsake our former propensities, and to renounce all the dictates of our own reason and will. He reduces all the actions of life to three classes, sobriety,

(e) Titus ii. 11—14.

righteousness, and godliness. "Sobriety" undoubtedly denotes chastity and temperance, as well as a pure and frugal use of temporal blessings, and patience under poverty. "Righteousness" includes all the duties of equity, that every man may receive what is his due. "Godliness" separates us from the pollutions of the world, and by true holiness unites us to God. When these virtues are indissolubly connected, they produce absolute perfection. But since nothing is more difficult than to forsake all carnal considerations, to renounce our subdued appetites, to devote ourselves to God and our brethren, and to live the life of angels amidst the corruptions of the world; in order to extricate our minds from every snare, Paul recals our attention to the hope of a blessed immortality; apprising us that our efforts are not in vain; because as Christ once appeared as a Redeemer, so at his second advent, he will manifest the benefits of the salvation he has obtained. Thus he dispels the fascinations which blind us, and prevent our aspiring with becoming ardour to the glories of heaven, and at the same time teaches us that we must live as strangers and pilgrims in the world, that we may not lose the heavenly inheritance.

IV. In these words, we perceive, that self-denial relates partly to men, but partly, and indeed principally, to God. For when the Scripture enjoins us to conduct ourselves in such a manner towards men, as in honour to prefer one another, and faithfully to devote our whole attention to the promotion of their advantage; (*f*) it gives such commands, as our heart can by no means receive, without having been previously divested of its natural bias. For we are all so blinded and fascinated with self-love, that every one imagines he has a just right to exalt himself, and to undervalue all others who stand in competition with him. If God hath conferred on us any valuable qualification, relying thereon, our hearts are immediately lifted up; and we not only swell, but almost burst with pride. The vices in which we abound, we sedulously conceal from others, and flatter ourselves with the pretence that they are diminutive and trivial, and even sometimes embrace them as virtues. If the same talents which we admire in ourselves, or even superior ones, appear in others, in order that we may not be obliged to

(*f*) Rom. xii. 10. Phil. ii. 4.

acknowledge their superiority, we depreciate and diminish them with the utmost malignity: if they have any vices, not content to notice them with severe and sharp animadversions, we odiously amplify them. Hence that insolence, that every one of us, as if exempted from the common lot, is desirous of pre-eminence above the rest of mankind; and severely and haughtily contemns every man, or at least despises him as an inferior. The poor yield to the rich, plebeians to nobles, servants to masters, the illiterate to the learned; but there is no man, who does not cherish within him some idea of his own excellence. Thus all men, in flattering themselves, carry as it were a kingdom in their own breast; for arrogating to themselves the height of self-gratulation, they pass censure on the understandings and conduct of others; but if any contention arises, it produces an eruption of the poison. For many discover some gentleness, as long as they find every thing pleasant and amiable; but how many are there who preserve the same constant course of good humour when they are disturbed and irritated? Nor is there any other remedy, than the eradication from the inmost recesses of the heart of this most noxious pest of ambition and self-love; as it is indeed eradicated by the doctrine of the Scripture. For if we attend to its instructions, we must remember, that the talents with which God hath favoured us, are not excellencies originating from ourselves, but free gifts of God; on which if any are proud, they betray their ingratitude. "Who maketh thee to differ?" saith Paul. "Now if thou didst receive all things, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received them?" (g) In the next place, by assiduous observation and acknowledgment of our faults, we must recal our minds to humility. Thus there will remain in us nothing to inflate us, but great reason for dejection. On the other hand, we are enjoined, whatever gifts of God we perceive in others, to revere and esteem them, so as to honour those in whom they reside. For it would betray great wickedness in us, to rob them of that honour which God hath given them. Their faults we are taught to overlook, not indeed to encourage them by adulation, but never on account of them to insult those whom we ought

(g) 1 Cor. iv. 7.

to encourage with benevolence and honour. The result of attention to these directions will be, that with whomsoever we are concerned, we shall conduct ourselves not only with moderation and good humour, but with civility and friendship. For we shall never arrive at true meekness by any other way, than by having our hearts imbued with self-dejection and a respect for others.

V. How extremely difficult it is for you to discharge your duty in seeking the advantage of your neighbour! Unless you quit all selfish considerations, and, as it were, lay aside yourself, you will effect nothing in this duty. For how can you perform those which Paul inculcates as works of charity, unless you renounce yourself, and devote yourself wholly to serve others? "Charity," says he, "suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked," &c. (*h*) If this be all that is required, that we seek not our own, we must do no small violence to nature, which so strongly inclines us to the exclusive love of ourselves, that it does not so easily permit us to neglect ourselves and our own concerns, in order to be vigilant for the advantage of others, and even voluntarily to recede from our right, to resign it to another. But the Scripture leads us to this, admonishes us, that whatever favours we obtain from the Lord, we are entrusted with them on this condition, that they should be applied to the common benefit of the Church; and that, therefore, the legitimate use of all his favours, is a liberal and kind communication of them to others. There cannot be imagined a more certain rule, or a more powerful exhortation to the observance of it, than when we are taught, that all the blessings we enjoy are Divine deposits, committed to our trust on this condition, that they should be dispensed for the benefit of our neighbours. But the Scripture goes still farther, when it compares them to the powers with which the members of the human body are endued. For no member has its power for itself, nor applies it to its private use; but transfuses it among its fellow members, receiving no advantage from it but what proceeds from the common convenience of the whole body. So, whatever

ability a pious man possesses, he ought to possess it for his brethren, consulting his own private interest in no way inconsistent with a cordial attention to the common edification of the Church. Let this then be our rule for benignity and beneficence; that whatever God hath conferred on us, which enables us to assist our neighbour, we are the stewards of it, who must one day render an account of our stewardship; and that the only right dispensation of what has been committed to us, is that which is regulated by the law of love. Thus we shall not always connect the study to promote the advantage of others with a concern for our own private interests, but shall prefer the good of others to our own. To teach us that the dispensation of the gifts we receive from heaven ought to be regulated by this law, God anciently enjoined the same even in regard to the smallest bounties of his liberality. For he commanded the people to offer to him first-fruits of the corn, as a solemn avowal that it was unlawful for them to enjoy any blessings not previously consecrated to him. And if the gifts of God are not sanctified to us till after we have with our own hands dedicated them to their Author, that must evidently be a sinful abuse which is unconnected with such a dedication. But in vain would you attempt to enrich the Lord by a communication of your possessions. Therefore, since your "goodness extendeth not to him," (i) as the Psalmist says, you must exercise it "towards the saints that are in the earth:" and alms are compared to sacred oblations, to shew that these exercises of charity under the gospel, correspond to those offerings under the law.

VI. Moreover, that we may not be weary of doing good, which otherwise would of necessity soon be the case, we must add also the other character mentioned by the apostle, that "charity suffereth long, and is not easily provoked." The Lord commands us to do "good unto all men," (k) universally, a great part of whom, estimated according to their own merits, are very undeserving: but here the Scripture assists us with an excellent rule, when it inculcates, that we must not regard the intrinsic merit of men, but must consider the image of God in them, to which we owe all possible honour and love: but that

(i) Psalm xvi. 2, 3.

(k) Heb. xiii. 16.

this image is most carefully to be observed in them “who are of the household of faith,” (*l*) inasmuch as it is renewed and restored by the Spirit of Christ. Whoever, therefore, is presented to you that needs your kind offices, you have no reason to refuse him your assistance. Say that he is a stranger; yet the Lord hath impressed on him a character which ought to be familiar to you; for which reason he forbids you to despise your own flesh. (*m*) Say that he is contemptible and worthless; but the Lord shews him to be one whom he hath deigned to grace with his own image. Say that you are obliged to him for no services; but God hath made him, as it were, his substitute, to whom you acknowledge yourself to be under obligations for numerous and important benefits. Say that he is unworthy of your making the smallest exertion on his account; but the image of God, by which he is recommended to you, deserves your surrender of yourself and all that you possess. If he not only has deserved no favour, but, on the contrary, has provoked you with injuries and insults; even this is no just reason why you should cease to embrace him with your affection, and to perform to him the offices of love. He has deserved, you will say, very different treatment from me. But what hath the Lord deserved? who, when he commands you to forgive men all their offences against you, certainly intends that they should be charged to himself. This is the only way of attaining that which is not only difficult, but utterly repugnant to the nature of man; to love them who hate us, (*n*) to requite injuries with kindnesses, and to return blessings for curses. (*o*) We should remember, that we must not reflect on the wickedness of men, but contemplate the Divine image in them; which, concealing and obliterating their faults, by its beauty and dignity allures us to embrace them in the arms of our love.

VII. This mortification, therefore, will not take place in us unless we fulfil all the duties of charity. These are fulfilled, not by him who merely performs all the external offices of charity, even without the omission of one, but by him who does this from a sincere principle of love. For it may happen, that a man may fully discharge his duty to all men, with respect to exter-

(*l*) Gal. vi. 10. (*m*) Isaiah lviii. 7. (*n*) Matt. v. 44. (*o*) Luke xvii. 3, 4.

nal actions, and, at the same time, be very far from discharging it in the right way. For you may see some men who would be thought extremely liberal, and yet never bestow any thing without upbraiding either by pride of countenance, or by insolence of language. And we are sunk to such a depth of calamity in this unhappy age, that scarcely any alms are given, at least by the majority of mankind, but in a haughty and contemptuous manner: a corruption, which ought not to have been tolerated even among heathens; for of Christians there is something farther required, than to display a cheerfulness of countenance, and to render their benefactions amiable by civility of language. In the first place, they ought to imagine themselves in the situation of the person who needs their assistance, and to commiserate his case, just as though they themselves felt and suffered the same; so that they may be impelled by a sense of mercy and humanity, to afford assistance to him as readily as if it were to themselves. He who comes to the assistance of his brethren under the influence of such a disposition, not only will not contaminate his services with arrogance or reproach, but will neither despise his brother who is the object of his beneficence, as needing assistance, nor domineer over him as under an obligation to him; no more, for instance, than we insult a diseased member, for whose restoration the rest of the body labours, or suppose it to be under particular obligations to the other members, because it has needed more assistance than it returned. For the communication of services between the members of the body, is esteemed to be in no sense gratuitous, but rather a discharge of that, which being due by the law of nature, it would be monstrous to refuse. And for this reason, he will not suppose himself to have discharged all his duty, who has performed one kind of service; as it generally happens, that a rich man, after having bestowed some part of his property, leaves other burdens to be borne by other persons, and considers himself as exempted from all concern about them. On the contrary, every man will reflect with himself, that however great he may be, he is a debtor to his neighbour, and that no bounds should be fixed to the exercise of beneficence towards them, except when his ability fails, which, as far as it extends, ought to be limited to the rule of charity.

VIII. Let us describe again, more at large, the principal branch of self-denial, which we have said relates to God; and indeed many observations have already been made concerning it, which it would be needless to repeat: it will be sufficient to shew how it habituates us to equanimity and patience. First, therefore, in seeking the convenience or tranquillity of the present life, the Scripture calls us to this point; that resigning ourselves and all that we have to the will of God, we should surrender to him the affections of our heart, to be conquered and reduced to subjection. To desire wealth and honours, to be ambitious of power, to accumulate riches, to amass all those vanities which appear conducive to magnificence and pomp, our passion is furious, and our cupidity unbounded. On the contrary, to poverty, obscurity, and meanness, we feel a wonderful fear and abhorrence, which stimulate us to avoid them by all possible means. Hence we may see, how restless the minds of all those persons are, who regulate their lives according to their own reason; how many arts they try, and with what exertions they fatigue themselves, in order, on the one hand, to obtain the objects of ambition or avarice, on the other, to avoid poverty and meanness. Pious men therefore, that they may not be involved in such snares, must pursue the following course. First, let them neither desire, nor hope, nor entertain a thought of prosperity, from any other cause than the Divine blessing; and on that let them securely and confidently depend. For however the flesh may appear to itself to be abundantly sufficient, when it either attempts by its own industry, or strenuous exertions, to attain honours and wealth, or is assisted by the favour of man; yet it is certain, that all these things are nothing, and that we shall obtain no advantage, either by ingenuity or by labour, but as far as the Lord shall prosper both. On the contrary, his benediction alone finds a way, even through all impediments, so as to bring all our affairs to a joyful and prosperous conclusion. And though we may, for the most part, be able without it to obtain for ourselves some degree of opulence and glory, as we daily behold impious men accumulating great honours and enormous wealth; yet, since those who are under the curse of God enjoy not even the smallest particle of happiness, we shall acquire nothing without the Divine blessing which will not

eventually prove a calamity to us. And that is by no means to be desired, the acquisition of which renders men more miserable.

IX. Therefore, if we believe that all the cause of prosperity and success consists in the Divine benediction alone, without which miseries and calamities of every kind await us; it follows also, that we should not passionately strive for wealth and honours, either relying on our own diligence or acuteness of understanding, or depending on the favour of men, or confiding in a vain imagination of chance; but that we should always regard the Lord, to be conducted by his direction to whatsoever lot he hath provided for us. The consequence of this will be; in the first place, that we shall not rush forward to seize on wealth or honours by unlawful actions, by deceitful and criminal arts, by rapacity and injury of our neighbours; but shall confine ourselves to the pursuit of those interests, which will not seduce us from the path of innocence. For who can expect the assistance of the Divine benediction, amidst fraud, rapine, and other iniquitous acts? For as that follows him only whose thoughts are pure, and whose actions are upright; so it calls away all those by whom it is sought, from irregular thoughts and corrupt practices. In the next place, we shall find a restraint laid upon us, to keep us from being inflamed with an inordinate desire of growing rich, and from ambitiously aspiring after honours. For with what face can any man confide in the assistance of God, towards obtaining things which he desires in opposition to the Divine word? Far be it from God to follow with the aid of his blessing, what he curses with his mouth. Lastly, if our success be not equal to our wishes and hopes, yet we shall be restrained from impatience, and from execrating our condition, whatever it may be; because we shall know, that this would be murmuring against God, at whose pleasure are dispensed riches and poverty, honour and contempt. In short, he who shall repose himself, in the manner we have mentioned, on the Divine blessing, will neither hunt after the objects violently coveted by men in general, by evil methods, from which he will expect no advantage; nor will he impute any prosperous event to himself, and to his own diligence, industry, or good fortune; but will acknowledge God to be the author of it. If, while the affairs of others are flourishing, he

makes but a small progress, or even moves in a retrograde direction; yet he will bear his poverty with more equanimity and moderation, than any profane man would feel with a mediocrity of success, which would merely be inferior to his wishes: possessing, indeed, a consolation in which he may enjoy more tranquil satisfaction, than in the zenith of opulence or power; because he considers, that his affairs are ordered by the Lord in such a manner as is conducive to his salvation. This we see was the disposition of David, who, while he follows God, surrenders himself to his government, and declares, that he is “as a child that is weaned of his mother; neither do I exercise myself,” says he, “in great matters, or in things too high for me.” (*p*)

X. Nor is this the only instance in which pious persons should feel such tranquillity and patience; the same state of mind ought to be extended to all the events to which the present life is exposed. Therefore no man has rightly renounced himself, but he who has wholly resigned himself to the Lord, so as to leave all the parts of his life to be governed by his will. He whose mind is thus composed, whatever may befall him, will neither think himself miserable, nor invidiously complain against God on account of his lot. The great necessity of this disposition will appear, if we consider the numerous accidents to which we are subject. Diseases of various kinds frequently attack us; at one time the pestilence is raging; at another, we are cruelly harassed with the calamities of war; at another time, frost or hail, devouring the hopes of the year, produces sterility, which brings us to penury; a wife, parents, children, or other relatives, are snatched away by death; our dwelling is consumed by a fire; these are the events, on the occurrence of which men curse this life, or their natal day, execrate heaven and earth, reproach God, and, as they are eloquent to blaspheme, accuse him of injustice and cruelty. But it behoves a believer, even in these events to contemplate the clemency and truly paternal goodness of God. Wherefore if he sees his relatives removed and his house rendered a solitary place, he must not cease to bless the Lord, but rather have recourse to this reflection; Yet the grace of the Lord, which inhabits my house, will not leave it desolate. Or if he sees his crops bitten or destroyed by frost, or

beaten down by hail, and famine threatening him; yet he will not sink into despondency or displeasure against God; but will abide in this confidence; We are under the guardian care of God, we are "the sheep of his pasture;" (q) he therefore will supply us with food even in seasons of the greatest barrenness. If he shall be afflicted with disease, even then he will not be so far discouraged by the bitterness of sorrow, as to break out into impatience and to complain against God; but will rather strengthen his patience by a consideration of the justice and lenity of the Divine correction. Finally, whatever may happen, knowing it to be ordained by the Lord, he will receive it with a placid and grateful heart, that he may not be guilty of contumaciously resisting his authority, to whose power he has once resigned himself and all that belongs to him. Far therefore from the heart of a Christian man be that foolish and most wretched consolation of the heathens, who, to fortify their minds against adversity, imputed it to fortune; with whom they esteemed it foolish to be displeased, because she was thoughtless and rash, and blindly wounded without discrimination the worthy and the unworthy. On the contrary, the rule of piety is, that God alone is the arbiter and governor of all events, both prosperous and adverse, and that he does not proceed with inconsiderate impetuosity, but dispenses to us blessings and calamities with the most systematic justice.



CHAPTER VIII.

Bearing the Cross, which is a Branch of Self-denial.

BUT it becomes a pious mind to rise still higher, even to that to which Christ calls his disciples; that every one should "take up his cross." (r) For all whom the Lord hath chosen and honoured with admission into the society of his saints, ought to prepare themselves for a life, hard, laborious, unquiet, and re-

(q) Psalm lxxix. 13.

(r) Matt. xvi. 24.

plete with numerous and various calamities. It is the will of their heavenly Father to exercise them in this manner, that he may have a certain proof of those that belong to him. Having begun with Christ his first-begotten Son, he pursues this method towards all his children. For though Christ was above all others the beloved Son, in whom the Father was always well pleased, (s) yet we see how little indulgence and tenderness he experienced; so that it may be truly said, not only that he was perpetually burdened with a cross during his residence on earth; but that his whole life was nothing but a kind of perpetual cross. The apostle assigns the reason, that it was necessary for him to "learn obedience by the things which he suffered." (t) Why then should we exempt ourselves from that condition, to which it behoved Christ our head to be subject; especially, since his submission was on our account, that he might exhibit to us an example of patience in his own person? Wherefore the apostle teaches, that it is the destination of all the children of God, "to be conformed to him." (u) It is also a source of signal consolation to us, in unpleasant and severe circumstances, which are esteemed adversities and calamities, that we partake of the sufferings of Christ; that as he from a labyrinth of all evils entered into the glory of heaven, so we are conducted forward through various tribulations to the same glory: (w) for Paul teaches us, that when we "know the fellowship of his sufferings," we also apprehend "the power of his resurrection;" that while we are conformed to his death, we are thus prepared to partake of his glorious resurrection. (x) How much is this adapted to alleviate all the bitterness of the cross, that the more we are afflicted by adversities, our fellowship with Christ is so much the more certainly confirmed. By this communion the sufferings themselves not only become blessings to us, but afford considerable assistance towards promoting our salvation.

II. Besides, our Lord was under no necessity of bearing the cross, except to testify and prove his obedience to his Father; but there are many reasons which render it necessary for us to live under a continual cross. First, as we are naturally too prone

(s) Matt. iii. 17. xvii. 5.

(t) Heb. v. 8.

(u) Rom. viii. 29.

(w) Acts xiv. 22.

(x) Phil. iii. 10.

to attribute every thing to our flesh, unless we have as it were ocular demonstration of our imbecility, we easily form an extravagant estimate of our strength, presuming that whatever may happen, it will remain undaunted and invincible amidst all difficulties. This inflates us with a foolish, vain, carnal confidence; relying on which, we become contumacious and proud, in opposition to God himself, just as though our own powers were sufficient for us without his grace. This arrogance he cannot better repress, than by proving to us from experience, not only our great imbecility, but also our extreme frailty. Therefore he afflicts us with ignominy, or poverty, or loss of relatives, or disease, or other calamities; to the bearing of which being in ourselves unequal, we ere long sink under them. Thus being humbled we learn to invoke his strength, which alone causes us to stand erect under a load of afflictions. Moreover, the greatest saints, though sensible that they stand by the grace of God, not by their own strength, are nevertheless more secure than they ought to be of their fortitude and constancy, unless he leads them by the discipline of the cross into a deeper knowledge of themselves. This presumption insinuated itself even into David; "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved: Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong. Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled."^(y) For he confesses that with the torpor of prosperity his senses were so stupified, that disregarding the grace of God, on which he ought to have depended, he relied on himself so as to promise himself a permanent standing. If this happened to so great a prophet, who of us should not be fearful and cautious? Though in prosperity, therefore, they have flattered themselves with the notion of superior constancy and patience, yet when humbled by adversity, they learn that this was mere hypocrisy. Admonished by such evidences of their maladies, the faithful advance in humility, and, divested of corrupt confidence in the flesh, betake themselves to the grace of God: and when they have applied to it, they experience the presence of the Divine strength, in which they find abundant protection.

III. This is what Paul teaches, that "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience."^(z) For the promise of God

(y) Psalm xxx. 6, 7.

(z) Rom. v. 3, 4.

to the faithful, that he will assist them in tribulations, they experience to be true, when they patiently stand supported by his power, which they certainly could not by their own strength. Patience, therefore, affords a proof to the saints, that God will really give the assistance he hath promised in every time of need. This also confirms their hope; for it would be too much ingratitude not to rely on the truth of God for the future, which they have hitherto experienced to be constant and certain. We see now what a series of benefits we derive from the cross. For subverting the opinion which we have falsely preconceived of our own strength, and detecting our hypocrisy with which we are enamoured, it expels pernicious and carnal confidence: when we are thus humbled, it teaches us to rely upon God alone, which keeps us from sinking under afflictions. And victory is followed by hope; inasmuch as the Lord, by the performance of his promises, hath established his truth for the future. Though these were the only reasons that could be given, they are sufficient to shew the necessity of the discipline of the cross. For it is no small advantage to be divested of a blind self-love, that we may be fully conscious of our imbecility; to be affected with a sense of our imbecility, that we may learn to be diffident of ourselves; to be diffident of ourselves, that we may transfer our confidence to God; to depend with unreserved confidence on God, that, relying on his assistance, we may persevere unconquered to the end; to stand in his grace, that he may know his veracity in his promises; to experience the certainty of his promises, that our hope may thereby be strengthened.

IV. The Lord hath also another end in afflicting his children; to try their patience and teach them obedience. Not, indeed, that they can perform any other obedience to him than that which he hath given them; but he is pleased in this manner, by clear evidences, to exhibit and testify the graces which he hath conferred on his saints, that they may not be concealed in inactivity within them. Therefore in giving an open manifestation of the strength and constancy in suffering, with which he hath furnished his servants, he is said to try their patience. Hence these expressions, that "God did tempt Abraham," and prove his piety from the circumstance of his not refusing to

sacrifice his own and only son. (a) Wherefore Peter states, that our faith is tried by tribulations, just as gold is tried by fire in a furnace. (b) Now who can say that it is not necessary for this most excellent gift of patience, which a believer has received from his God, to be brought forward into use, that it may be ascertained and manifested? For otherwise men will never esteem it as it deserves. But if God himself acts justly, when, to prevent the virtues which he hath conferred on the faithful from being concealed in obscurity and remaining useless and perishing, he furnishes an occasion for exciting them; there is the best of reasons for the afflictions of the saints, without which they would have no patience. By the cross they are also, I say, instructed to obedience; because they are thus taught to live, not according to their own inclination, but according to the will of God. If every thing succeeded with them according to their wishes, they would not know what it is to follow God. And Seneca mentions that this was an ancient proverb, when they would exhort any one to bear adversity with patience, "Follow God." This implied, that man submitted to the yoke of God, only when he resigned himself to his corrections. Now, if it is most reasonable that we should prove ourselves in all things obedient to our heavenly Father, we certainly ought not to deny him the use of every possible method to accustom us to practise this obedience.

V. Yet we do not perceive how necessary this obedience is to us, unless we at the same time reflect on the great wantonness of our flesh to shake off the divine yoke, as soon as we have been treated with a little tenderness and indulgence. The case is exactly the same as with refractory horses, which after having been pampered for some days in idleness grow fierce and untameable, and regard not the rider, to whose management they previously submitted. And we are perpetual examples of what God complains of in the people of Israel; when we are "waxen fat," and are "covered with fatness," (c) we kick against him who hath cherished and supported us. The beneficence of God ought to have allured us to the consideration and love of his goodness: but since such is our ingratitude, that

(a) Gen. xxii. 1, 12.

(b) 1 Peter i. 7.

(c) Deut. xxxii. 15.

we are rather constantly corrupted by his indulgence, it is highly necessary for us to be restrained by some discipline from breaking out into such petulance. Therefore, that we may not be made haughty by an excessive abundance of wealth, that we may not become proud on being distinguished with honours, that we may not be rendered insolent by being inflated with other advantages, mental, corporeal, or external, the Lord himself, as he foresees will be expedient, by the remedy of the cross, opposes, restrains, and subdues the haughtiness of our flesh; and that by various methods, adapted to promote the benefit of each individual. For we are not all equally afflicted with the same diseases, or all in need of an equally severe method of cure. Hence we see different persons exercised with different kinds of crosses. But whilst the heavenly Physician, consulting the health of all his patients, practises a milder treatment towards some, and cures others with rougher remedies; yet he leaves no one completely exempted, because he knows we are all diseased, without the exception of a single individual.

• VI. Moreover it is necessary that our most merciful Father should not only prevent our infirmity for the future, but also frequently correct our past offences, to preserve us in a course of legitimate obedience to himself. Wherefore in every affliction we ought immediately to recollect the course of our past life. In reviewing it, we shall certainly find that we have committed what was deserving of such chastisement. Nevertheless the exhortation to patience must not be principally founded on a consciousness of sin. For the Scripture furnishes a far better consideration, when it informs us, that in adversity "we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." (*d*) Therefore even in the bitterness of tribulations it becomes us to acknowledge the clemency and benignity of our Father towards us; since even then he ceases not to promote our salvation. For he afflicts, not to ruin or destroy us, but rather to deliver us from the condemnation of the world. This idea will lead us to what the Scripture inculcates in another place: "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord,

neither be weary of his correction; for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." (e) When we recognise the rod of a father, is it not our duty rather to shew ourselves obedient and docile children, than contumaciously to imitate desperate men, who have been hardened in their transgressions? God loses us, unless he recalls us after our defections from him; so that the apostle correctly remarks, "If ye be without chastisement, then are ye bastards, and not sons." (f) We are extremely perverse, therefore, if we cannot bear with him, while he declares his benevolence towards us, and his great concern for our salvation. The Scripture points out this difference between believers and unbelievers; the latter, as the slaves of an inveterate and incurable iniquity, are only rendered more wicked and obstinate by correction; the former, like ingenuous children, are led to a salutary repentance. You have to choose now in which number you would prefer to stand. But having treated of this subject elsewhere, I shall conclude, contenting myself with having thus briefly touched on it here.

VII. But it is a source of peculiar consolation when we suffer persecution "for righteousness' sake." (g) For we ought then to reflect how greatly we are honoured by God, when he thus distinguishes us with the peculiar characteristic of his service. I call it persecution for righteousness' sake, not only when we suffer in defence of the Gospel, but also when we are molested in the vindication of any just cause. Whether, therefore, in asserting the truth of God in opposition to the falsehoods of Satan, or in undertaking the protection of good and innocent men against the injuries of the wicked, it be necessary for us to incur the resentment and hatred of the world, by which our lives, our fortunes, or our reputation, may be endangered; let it not be grievous or irksome to us thus far to employ ourselves in the service of God; nor let us imagine ourselves to be miserable in those respects in which he hath with his own mouth pronounced us blessed. It is true, that poverty, considered in itself, is misery; and the same may be said of exile, contempt, imprisonment, ignominy: finally,

(e) Prov. iii. 11, 12.

(f) Heb. xii. 8.

(g) Matt. v. 10.

death is of all calamities the last and worst. But with the favour of our God, they are all conducive to our happiness. Let us therefore be content with the testimony of Christ, rather than with the false opinion of the flesh. Thus we shall rejoice, like the apostles, whenever he shall "count us worthy to suffer shame for his name." (h) For if, being innocent and conscious of our own integrity, we are stripped of our property by the villany of the wicked, we are reduced to poverty indeed among men, but we thereby obtain an increase of true riches with God in heaven; if we are banished from our country, we are more intimately received into the family of God; if we meet with vexation and contempt, we are so much the more firmly rooted in Christ; if we are stigmatized with reproach and ignominy, we are so much the more exalted in the kingdom of God; if we are massacred, it opens an entrance for us into a life of blessedness. We ought to be ashamed of setting a lower estimation on things to which the Lord hath attached such a great value, than on the shadowy and evanescent pleasures of the present life.

VIII. Since the Scripture therefore, by these and similar instructions, affords abundant consolation under all the ignominy and calamity which we sustain in the defence of righteousness, we are chargeable with extreme ingratitude if we do not receive them from the hand of the Lord with cheerful resignation: especially since this is the species of affliction, or the cross, most peculiar to the faithful, by which Christ will be glorified in us; according to the declaration of Peter. (i) And contumelious treatment being to ingenuous minds more intolerable than a hundred deaths, Paul expressly apprises us, that not only persecutions but *reproaches* await us "because we trust in the living God." (k) As in another place he directs us by his example to go through "evil report and good report." (l) Nor are we required to exercise such a cheerfulness as to banish all sense of bitterness and sorrow; the saints could discover no patience under the cross, unless they were tormented with sorrow and harassed with grief. If there were no hardship in poverty, no agony in diseases, no distress in ignominy, no hor-

(h) Acts v. 41. (i) 1 Peter iv. 14. (k) 1 Tim. iv. 10. (l) 2 Cor. vi. 8.

ror in death; what fortitude or moderation would be displayed in regarding them with absolute indifference? But since each of these by its own essential bitterness naturally preys on all our hearts, herein the fortitude of a believer is manifested, if when he experiences such bitterness, how grievously soever he may be distressed by it, yet by valiantly resisting he at length overcomes it; his patience displays itself, if, when he is sharply provoked, he is nevertheless restrained by the fear of God from any eruptions of intemperance: his cheerfulness is conspicuous, if, when he is wounded by sadness and sorrow, he is satisfied with the spiritual consolation of God.

IX. This conflict, which the faithful sustain against the natural emotions of sorrow, while they cultivate patience and moderation, Paul has elegantly described in the following words: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." (*m*) You see that patiently to bear the cross does not consist in an absolute stupefaction and privation of all sense of sorrow, according to the foolish description given by the ancient Stoics of a magnanimous man, as one who, divested of the feelings of human nature, was alike unaffected by adverse and prosperous events, by sorrowful and joyful ones. And what advantage have they derived from this sublime wisdom? They have depicted an image of patience, such as never has been found, such as never can exist among men; but in their ardour for a patience too perfect and precise, they have banished its influence from human life. At present also among Christians there are modern Stoics, who esteem it sinful not only to groan and weep, but even to discover sadness and solicitude. These paradoxes generally proceed from idle men, who, employing themselves more in speculation than in action, can produce nothing but such paradoxical notions. But we have nothing to do with that iron-hearted philosophy, which our Master and Lord has condemned not only in words but even by his own example. For he mourned and wept both for his own calamities and for those of others: nor did he teach his disciples a different conduct; "The world," says he, "shall

(*m*) 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.

rejoice, but ye shall weep and lament." (n) And that no man might pervert it into a crime, he has formally pronounced a blessing on them that mourn: (o) and no wonder. For if all tears be reprobated, what judgment shall we form concerning the Lord himself, from whose body distilled tears of blood? (p) If every terror be stigmatized with the charge of unbelief, what character shall we attribute to that horror and consternation with which we read that he was so violently depressed? If all sorrow be displeasing, how can we be pleased with his confessing that his "soul" was "sorrowful even unto death?"

X. I have thought proper to mention these things, in order to preserve pious minds from despair; that they may not hastily renounce the study of patience, because they cannot divest themselves of the natural affection of sorrow. This must necessarily be the case with those who degrade patience into insensibility, and a man of fortitude and constancy into a senseless block. For the Scripture applauds the saints for their patience, when they are afflicted with severe calamities, but not broken and overcome by them; when they are bitterly distressed, but are filled at the same time with spiritual joy; when they are oppressed with anxiety, but are revived and exhilarated with Divine consolation. At the same time there is that opposition in their hearts, that the feelings of nature avoid and dread those things which they experience to be inimical to it; but the affection of piety struggles even through these difficulties to obey the Divine will. This opposition the Lord expressed, when he thus addressed Peter; "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." (q) It is not probable that Peter, when he was called to glorify God by his death, was drawn to it with reluctance and resistance; in this case his martyrdom would be entitled to little applause. But however he might submit with the greatest alacrity of heart to the Divine appointment, yet, not having divested himself of human nature, he was distracted by two contrary inclinations. For when he contemplated the bloody death he was about to undergo, stricken with a dread of it he would

(n) John xvi. 20. (o) Matt. v. 4. (p) Luke xxii. 44. (q) John xxi. 18.

gladly have escaped. On the contrary, when he considered that he was called to it by the Divine will, suppressing all fear, he unreluctantly and even cheerfully submitted to it. It must be our study, therefore, if we would be the disciples of Christ, that our minds may be imbued with so great a reverence for God, and such an unreserved obedience to him, as may overcome all contrary affections, and make them submit to his appointments. Thus whatever kind of affliction we endure, even in the greatest distresses of the mind, we shall constantly retain our patience. For adversity itself will have its stings, with which we shall be wounded. Thus, when afflicted with disease, we shall groan and be disquieted, and pray for the restoration of health: thus, when oppressed with poverty, we shall feel the stings of solicitude and sorrow; thus we shall be affected with the grief of ignominy, contempt, and injury; thus we shall shed the tears due to nature at the funerals of our friends; but we shall always recur to this conclusion, This affliction is appointed by the Lord, therefore let us submit to his will. Even in the agonies of grief, amid groans and tears, there is a necessity for the intervention of this reflection, in order to incline the heart cheerfully to bear those things by which it is so affected.

XI. But as we have deduced the principal reason for bearing the cross from a consideration of the Divine will, we must briefly point out the difference between philosophical and Christian patience. For very few of the philosophers have risen to such an eminence of reason, as to perceive that we are exercised with afflictions by the Divine hand, and to conclude that God ought to be obeyed in these occurrences; and even those who have gone to this length, adduce no other reason, than because it is necessary. What is this but saying, that we must submit to God, because it were in vain to contend against him? For if we obey God only from necessity; if it were possible to escape from him, our obedience would cease. But the Scripture enjoins us to consider the Divine will in a very different point of view; first, as consistent with justice and equity; secondly, as directed to the accomplishment of our salvation. Christian exhortations to patience, then, are such as these: Whether we are afflicted with poverty, or exile, or imprisonment, or reproach, or disease, or loss of relatives, or any other

similar calamity, we must reflect that none of these things happen without the appointment and providence of God; and moreover, that he does nothing but with the most systematic justice. Do not our innumerable and daily transgressions deserve more severe and grievous chastisements than those which his clemency inflicts on us? Is it not highly reasonable that our flesh should be subdued, and as it were accustomed to the yoke, lest it should break out according to its propensities into lawless excesses? Are not the righteousness and truth of God worthy of our labours on their account? But if the equity of God evidently appears in our afflictions, we cannot without iniquity either murmur or resist. We no longer hear that frigid maxim of the philosophers, We must submit to necessity: but a lesson lively and full of efficacy, We must obey, because it is unlawful to resist; We must patiently suffer, because impatience is a rebellious opposition to the justice of God. Because nothing is really amiable to us but what we know to be conducive to our benefit and salvation, our most merciful Father affords us consolation also in this respect, by declaring, that even in afflicting us with the cross he promotes our salvation. But if it be evident that tribulations are salutary for us, why should we not endure them with grateful and placid hearts? In patiently bearing them, therefore, we do not submit to necessity, but acquiesce in our own benefit. The effect of these considerations is, that in proportion as our minds are oppressed under the cross with the natural sense of affliction, so greatly are they dilated with spiritual joy. This is attended also by thanksgiving, which cannot be without joy. But if praise and thanksgiving to the Lord can only proceed from a cheerful and joyful heart, and there is nothing which ought to repress these emotions within us; this shews how necessary it is that the bitterness of the cross should be tempered with spiritual joy.

CHAPTER IX.

Meditation on the future Life.

WITH whatever kind of tribulation we may be afflicted, we should always keep this end in view; to habituate ourselves to a contempt of the present life, that we may thereby be excited to meditation on that which is to come. For the Lord, well knowing our strong natural inclination to a brutish love of the world, adopts a most excellent method to reclaim us and rouse us from our insensibility, that we may not be too tenaciously attached to that foolish affection. There is not one of us who is not desirous of appearing, through the whole course of his life, to aspire and strive after celestial immortality. For we are ashamed of excelling in no respect the brutal herds; whose condition would not be at all inferior to ours, unless there remained to us a hope of eternity after death. But if you examine the designs, pursuits, and actions of every individual, you will find nothing in them but what is terrestrial. Hence that stupidity, that the mental eyes, dazzled with the vain splendour of riches, power, and honours, cannot see to any considerable distance. The heart also, occupied and oppressed with avarice, ambition, and other inordinate desires, cannot rise to any eminence. In a word, the whole soul, fascinated by carnal allurements, seeks its felicity on earth. To oppose this evil, the Lord, by continual lessons of miseries, teaches his children the vanity of the present life. That they may not promise themselves profound and secure peace in it, therefore he permits them to be frequently disquieted and infested with wars or tumults, with robberies or other injuries. That they may not aspire with too much avidity after transient and uncertain riches, or depend on those which they possess; sometimes by exile, sometimes by the sterility of the land, sometimes by a conflagration, sometimes by other means, he reduces them to indigence, or at least confines them within the limits of mediocrity. That they may not be too complacently delighted with conjugal blessings, he either causes them to be distressed with the wickedness of their wives, or humbles them with a wicked offspring, or afflicts them with want or loss of children. But

if in all these things he is more indulgent to them, yet that they may not be inflated with vain-glory, or improper confidence, he shews them by diseases and dangers the unstable and transitory nature of all mortal blessings. We therefore truly derive advantage from the discipline of the cross, only when we learn that this life, considered in itself, is unquiet, turbulent, miserable in numberless instances, and in no respect altogether happy; and that all its reputed blessings are uncertain, transient, vain, and adulterated with a mixture of many evils; and in consequence of this at once conclude, that nothing can be sought or expected on earth but conflict, and that when we think of a crown we must raise our eyes towards heaven. For it must be admitted, that the mind is never seriously excited to desire and meditate on the future life, without having previously imbibed a contempt of the present.

II. There is no medium between these two extremes; either the earth must become vile in our estimation, or it must retain our immoderate love. Wherefore if we have any concern about eternity, we must use our most diligent efforts to extricate ourselves from these fetters. Now since the present life has numerous blandishments to attract us, and much pleasure, beauty, and sweetness to delight us; it is very necessary to our highest interests, that we should be frequently called off, that we may not be fascinated with such allurements. For what would be the consequence, if we were perpetually happy in the enjoyment of the blessings of this life; since we cannot, even by the incessant stimulus of calamity after calamity, be sufficiently aroused to a consideration of its misery? That human life is like a vapour or a shadow, is not only known to the learned, but even the vulgar have no proverb more common; and perceiving it to be a thing the knowledge of which would be eminently useful, they have represented it in many remarkable sentences. But there is scarcely any thing which we more carelessly consider, or sooner forget: for we undertake every thing as though we were erecting for ourselves an immortality on earth. If a funeral pass by, or we walk among the tombs, because the image of death is then presented to our eyes, we philosophise, I confess, in an admirable manner concerning the vanity of the present life; although even that is not always the

case, for frequently we are quite unaffected with all these things. But when this effect is produced, our philosophy is momentary, vanishing as soon as we withdraw, and leaving not even the smallest vestige behind it: in short, it passes away and is forgotten just like the plaudits of a theatre at any entertaining exhibition. And forgetting not only death but mortality itself, as though no rumour concerning it had ever reached us, we relapse into a supine security of immortality on earth. If any one in the mean time reminds us of the unwelcome proverb, that man is a creature of a day, we acknowledge the truth of it indeed, but with such inattention that the idea of perpetually living here still remains fixed in our minds. Who then can deny, that it is highly useful to us all, I do not say to be admonished by words, but by every possible evidence to be convinced, of the miserable condition of the present life; since even after we are convinced of it, we scarcely cease to be besotted with a perverse and foolish admiration of it, as though it contained the greatest attainable blessings? But if it be necessary for God to instruct us, it is on the other hand our duty to listen to him when he calls, and rebukes our sluggishness; in order that, despising the world, we may apply ourselves with our whole heart to meditate on the life which is to come.

III. But the faithful should accustom themselves to such a contempt of the present life, as may not generate either hatred of life, or ingratitude towards God. For this life, though it is replete with innumerable miseries, is yet deservedly reckoned among the Divine blessings which must not be despised. Wherefore if we discover nothing of the Divine beneficence in it, we are already guilty of no small ingratitude towards God himself. But to the faithful especially it should be a testimony of the Divine benevolence, since the whole of it is destined to the advancement of their salvation. For before he openly discovers to us the inheritance of eternal glory, he intends to reveal himself as our Father in inferior instances; and those are the benefits which he daily confers on us. Since this life, then, is subservient to a knowledge of the Divine goodness, shall we fastidiously scorn it as though it contained no particle of goodness in it? We must therefore have this sense and affection, to class it among the bounties of the Divine benignity which are

not to be rejected. For if Scripture testimonies were wanting, which are very numerous and clear, even nature itself exhorts us to give thanks to the Lord for having introduced us to the light of life, for granting us the use of it, and giving us all the helps necessary to its preservation. And it is a far superior reason for gratitude, if we consider that here we are in some measure prepared for the glory of the heavenly kingdom. For the Lord hath ordained, that they who are to be hereafter crowned in heaven, must first engage in conflicts on earth, that they may not triumph without having surmounted the difficulties of warfare and obtained the victory. Another reason is, that here we begin in various blessings to taste the sweetness of the Divine benignity, that our hope and desire may be excited after the full revelation of it. When we have come to this conclusion, that our life in this world is a gift of the Divine clemency, which, as we owe to him, we ought to remember with gratitude; it will then be time for us to descend to a consideration of its most miserable condition, that we may be delivered from excessive cupidity, to which, as has been observed, we are naturally inclined.

IV. Now whatever is abstracted from the corrupt love of this life should be added to the desire of a better. I grant, indeed, the correctness of their opinion, who considered it as the greatest blessing, not to be born, and as the next, to die immediately. For, being heathens, destitute of the knowledge of God and of true religion, what could they see in it but unhappiness and misery? Nor was there any thing irrational in the conduct of those who mourned and wept at the births of their relations, and solemnly rejoiced at their funerals. But they practised this without any advantage; for, destitute of the true doctrine of faith, they did not perceive how that can conduce to the benefit of the pious, which in itself is neither blessed nor desirable; and so their views terminated in despair. It should be the object of the faithful, therefore, in judging of this mortal life, that understanding it to be of itself nothing but misery, they may apply themselves wholly, with increasing cheerfulness and readiness, to meditate on the future and eternal life. When we come to this comparison, then indeed the former may be not only securely neglected, but, in competition with the latter, at-

together despised and abhorred. For if heaven is our country, what is the earth but a place of exile? If the departure out of the world is an entrance into life, what is the world but a sepulchre? What is a continuance in it, but an absorption in death? If deliverance from the body is an introduction into complete liberty, what is the body but a prison? If to enjoy the presence of God is the summit of felicity, is it not misery to be destitute of it? But till we escape out of the world, “we are absent from the Lord.” (*r*) Therefore if the terrestrial life be compared with the celestial, it should undoubtedly be despised and accounted of no value. It certainly is never to be hated, except inasmuch as it keeps us obnoxious to sin; although even that hatred is not properly to be applied to life itself. It becomes us, however, to be so affected with weariness or hatred of it, as to desire its end, but to be also prepared to remain in it during the Divine pleasure; that is to say, our weariness should be remote from all murmuring and impatience. For it is a station in which the Lord hath placed us, to be retained by us till he call us away. Paul indeed bewails his lot, that he is kept in bondage by the fetters of the body longer than he would wish, and sighs with an ardent desire of deliverance; (*s*) nevertheless, obedient to the Divine authority, he professes himself prepared for both; for he acknowledges himself under an obligation to God to glorify his name either by life or by death; (*t*) but that it belongs to the Lord to determine what will conduce most to his glory. Therefore if it becomes us “to live and to die to the Lord,” (*u*) let us leave the limits of our life and death to his decision; yet in such a manner, as ardently to desire and continually to meditate on the latter, but to despise the former in comparison with future immortality, and on account of the servitude of sin, to wish to forsake it whenever it shall please the Lord.

V. But it is monstrous, that instead of this desire of death, multitudes, who boast themselves to be Christians, are filled with such a dread of it, that they tremble whenever it is mentioned, as if it were the greatest calamity that could befall them. It is no wonder, indeed, if our natural feelings should be alarmed at

(*r*) 2 Cor. v. 6.(*s*) Rom. vii. 24.(*t*) Phil. i. 20.(*u*) Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

hearing of our dissolution. But it is intolerable that there should not be in a Christian breast sufficient light of piety, to overcome and suppress all that fear with superior consolation. For if we consider, that this unstable, depraved, corruptible, frail, withering, and rotten tabernacle of our body is dissolved, in order that it may hereafter be restored to a durable, perfect, incorruptible, and heavenly glory; will not faith constrain us ardently to desire what nature dreads? If we consider, that by death we are recalled from exile to inhabit our own country, and that a heavenly one, shall we derive thence no consolation? But it will be said, There is nothing that does not desire to be permanent. I admit it; and contend, that we ought therefore to direct our views to a future immortality, where we may obtain a fixed condition, which is nowhere to be found on earth. For Paul excellently teaches the faithful to go with alacrity to death, "not for that they would be unclothed, but clothed upon." (x) Shall brute animals, and even inanimate creatures, down to stocks and stones, conscious of their present vanity, be looking forward to the resurrection at the last day, that they may be delivered from vanity, together with the children of God: and shall we, endued with the light of understanding, and, what is superior to the natural understanding, illuminated with the Spirit of God, when the question respects our own existence, not raise our minds above the corruption of this world? But it is not necessary to my present design, nor suitable in this place, to argue against such extreme perverseness. And I have already declared in the beginning, that I would not undertake a diffuse discussion of common-place topics. I would persuade such timid minds to read Cyprian's treatise on mortality, unless they were worthy of being recommended to the philosophers, that they may begin to blush, when they see the contempt of death discovered by them. But this we may positively conclude, that no man has made any good proficiency in the school of Christ, but he who joyfully expects both the day of death and that of the final resurrection. For Paul describes all believers by this character; (y) and the Scripture often recals our attention to it, when it intends to furnish us with a reason for true joy. "Look up," saith the

(x) 2 Cor. v. 4.

(y) Titus ii. 13.

Lord, "and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." (z) Is it reasonable, that what he designed so powerfully to excite us to exultation and alacrity, should produce nothing but sorrow and consternation? If this be the case, why do we still glory in him as our master? Let us therefore acquire a sounder judgment; and notwithstanding the opposition of our blind and stupid cupidity of the flesh, let us not hesitate ardently to desire the advent of the Lord, as of all events the most auspicious. For he shall come to us as a Redeemer, to deliver us from this bottomless gulf of all evils and miseries, and introduce us into that blessed inheritance of his life and glory.

VI. It is certainly true, that the whole family of the faithful, as long as they dwell on the earth, must be "accounted as sheep for the slaughter," (a) that they may be conformed to Christ their head. Their state, therefore, would be extremely deplorable, if they did not elevate their thoughts toward heaven, to rise above all sublunary things, and look beyond present appearances. (b) On the contrary, when they have once raised their heads above this world, although they see the impious flourishing in riches and honours, and enjoying the most profound tranquillity; though they see them boasting of their splendour and luxury, and behold them abounding in every delight; though they may also be harassed by their wickedness, insulted by their pride, defrauded by their avarice, and may receive from them any other lawless provocations; yet they will find no difficulty in supporting themselves even under such calamities as these. For they will keep in view that day, when the Lord will receive his faithful servants into his peaceful kingdom; will wipe every tear from their eyes, (c) invest them with robes of joy, adorn them with crowns of glory, entertain them with his ineffable delights, exalt them to fellowship with his majesty, and, in a word, honour them with a participation of his happiness. But the impious, who have been great in this world, he will precipitate down to the lowest ignominy; he will change their delights into torments, and their laughter and mirth into weeping and gnashing of teeth; he will disturb their

(z) Luke xxi. 28.

(a) Rom. viii. 36.

(b) 1 Cor. xv. 19.

(c) Isaiah xxv. 8. Rev. vii. 17.

tranquillity with dreadful agonies of conscience, and will punish their delicacy with inextinguishable fire, and even put them in subjection to the pious, whose patience they have abused. For, according to Paul, "it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble" the saints, "and to" them "who are troubled, rest; when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven." (d) This is our only consolation; and deprived of this, we must of necessity either sink into despondency of mind, or solace ourselves to our own destruction with the vain pleasures of the world. For even the Psalmist confesses that he staggered, (e) when he was too much engaged in contemplating the present prosperity of the impious; and that he could no otherwise establish himself, till he entered the sanctuary of God, and directed his views to the last end of the godly and of the wicked. To conclude in one word, the cross of Christ triumphs in the hearts of believers, over the devil and the flesh, over sin and impious men, only when their eyes are directed to the power of the resurrection.



CHAPTER X.

The right Use of the present Life and its Supports.

BY such principles, the Scripture also fully instructs us in the right use of terrestrial blessings; a thing that ought not to be neglected in a plan for the regulation of life. For if we must live, we must also use the necessary supports of life; nor can we avoid even those things which appear to subserve our pleasures rather than our necessities. It behoves us, therefore, to observe moderation, that we may use them with a pure conscience, whether for necessity or for pleasure. This the Lord prescribes in his word, when he teaches us, that to his servants the present life is like a pilgrimage, in which they are travelling towards the celestial kingdom. If we are only to pass

(d) 2 Thess. i. 6, 7.

(e) Psalm lxxiii. 2, &c.

through the earth, we ought undoubtedly to make such an use of its blessings, as will rather assist than retard us in our journey. It is not without reason, therefore, that Paul advises us to use this world as though we used it not, and to buy with the same disposition with which we sell. (f) But as this is a difficult subject, and there is danger of falling into one of two opposite errors, let us endeavour to proceed on safe ground, that we may avoid both extremes. For there have been some, in other respects good and holy men, who, seeing that intemperance and luxury, unless restrained with more than ordinary severity, would perpetually indulge the most extravagant excesses, and desiring to correct such a pernicious evil, have adopted the only method which occurred to them, by permitting men to use corporeal blessings no further than their necessity should absolutely require. This advice was well intended, but they were far too austere. For they committed the very dangerous error of imposing on the conscience stricter rules than those which are prescribed to it by the word of the Lord. By restriction within the demands of necessity, they meant an abstinence from every thing from which it is possible to abstain; so that according to them, it would scarcely be lawful to eat or drink any thing but bread and water. Others have discovered still greater austerity, like Crates the Theban, who is said to have thrown his wealth into the sea, from an apprehension that, unless it were destroyed, he should himself be destroyed by it. On the contrary, many in the present day, who seek a pretext to excuse intemperance in the use of external things, and at the same time desire to indulge the licentiousness of the flesh, assume as granted, what I by no means concede to them, that this liberty is not to be restricted by any limitation; but that it ought to be left to the conscience of every individual to use as much as he thinks lawful for himself. I grant, indeed, that it is neither right nor possible to bind the conscience with the fixed and precise rules of law in this case; but since the Scripture delivers general rules for the lawful use of earthly things, our practice ought certainly to be regulated by them.

(f) 1 Cor. vii. 30, 31.

II. It must be laid down as a principle, that the use of the gifts of God is not erroneous, when it is directed to the same end for which the Creator himself hath created and appointed them for us; since he hath created them for our benefit, not for our injury. Wherefore, no one will observe a more proper rule, than he who shall diligently regard this end. Now, if we consider for what end he hath created the various kinds of aliment, we shall find, that he intended to provide not only for our necessity, but likewise for our pleasure and delight. So in clothing, he hath had in view not mere necessity, but propriety and decency. In herbs, trees, and fruits, beside their various uses, his design has been to gratify us by graceful forms and pleasant odours. For if this were not true, the Psalmist would not recount among the Divine blessings, "wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine;" (g) nor would the Scriptures universally declare, in commendation of his goodness, that he hath given all these things to men. And even the natural properties of things sufficiently indicate for what end, and to what extent it is lawful to use them. But shall the Lord have endued flowers with such beauty, to present itself to our eyes, with such sweetness of smell to impress our sense of smelling; and shall it be unlawful for our eyes to be affected with the beautiful prospect, or our olfactory nerves with the agreeable odour? What! Hath he not made such a distinction of colours as to render some more agreeable than others? What! Hath he not given to gold and silver, to ivory and marble, a beauty which makes them more precious than other metals or stones? In a word, hath he not made many things worthy of our estimation, independently of any necessary use?

III. Let us discard, therefore, that inhuman philosophy which, allowing no use of the creatures but what is absolutely necessary, not only malignantly deprives us of the lawful enjoyment of the Divine beneficence; but which cannot be embraced till it has despoiled man of all his senses, and reduced him to a senseless block. But on the other hand, we must, with equal diligence, oppose the licentiousness of the flesh; which, unless

it be rigidly restrained, transgresses every bound. And, as I have observed, it has its advocates, who, under the pretext of liberty, allow it every thing. In the first place, it will be one check to it, if it be concluded, that all things are made for us, in order that we may know and acknowledge their Author, and celebrate his goodness towards us by giving him thanks. What will become of thanksgiving, if you overcharge yourself with dainties or wine, so as to be stupified or rendered unfit for the duties of piety and the business of your station? Where is any acknowledgment of God, if your body, in consequence of excessive abundance being inflamed with the vilest passions, infects the mind with its impurity, so that you cannot discern what is right or virtuous? Where is gratitude towards God, if on account of our sumptuous and ornamented apparel, we admire ourselves and despise others? if with the elegance and beauty of it, we prepare ourselves for unchastity? Where is our acknowledgment of God, if our minds be fixed on the splendour of our garments? For many so entirely devote all their senses to the pursuit of pleasure, that the mind is as it were buried in it; many are so delighted with marble, gold, and pictures, that they become like statues, are as it were metamorphosed into metal, and resemble painted images. The flavour of meats, or the sweetness of odours, so stupifies some, that they have no relish for any thing spiritual. Similar errors may be observed in others. Wherefore it is evident, that this principle lays some restraint on the license of abusing the Divine bounties, and confirms the rule given us by Paul, that we “make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof;” (i) which, if they are allowed too much latitude, will transgress all the bounds of temperance and moderation.

IV. But there is no way more certain or concise, than what we derive from a contempt of the present life, and meditation on a heavenly immortality. For thence follow two rules. The first is, “that they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it;” (k) according to the direction of Paul: the second, that we should learn to bear

(i) Rom. xiii. 14.

(k) Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31.

penury with tranquillity and patience, as well as to enjoy abundance with moderation. He who commands us to use this world as though we used it not, prohibits not only all intemperance in eating and drinking, and excessive delicacy, ambition, pride, haughtiness, and squeamishness in our furniture, our habitations, and our apparel; but every care and affection, which would either seduce or disturb us from thoughts of the heavenly life, and attention to the improvement of our souls. Now it was anciently and truly observed by Cato, That there is a great concern about adorning the body, and a great carelessness about virtue; and it is an old proverb, That they who are much engaged in the care of the body, are generally negligent of the soul. Therefore, though the liberty of the faithful in external things cannot be reduced to certain rules, yet it is evidently subject to this law, That they should indulge themselves as little as possible; that, on the contrary, they should perpetually and resolutely exert themselves to retrench all superfluities and to restrain luxury; and that they should diligently beware lest they pervert into impediments things which were given for their assistance.

V. The other rule will be, That persons whose property is small should learn to be patient under their privations, that they may not be tormented with an immoderate desire of riches. They who observe this moderation, have attained no small proficiency in the school of the Lord, as he who has made no proficiency in this point can scarcely give any proof of his being a disciple of Christ. For beside that an inordinate desire of earthly things is accompanied by most other vices, he who is impatient under penury, in abundance generally betrays the opposite passion. By this I mean, that he who is ashamed of a mean garment, will be proud of a splendid one; he who, not content with a slender meal, is disquieted with the desire of a more sumptuous one, would also intemperately abuse those dainties, should they fall to his lot; he who bears a private and mean condition with discontent and disquietude, would not abstain from pride and arrogance, should he rise to eminence and honours. Let all, therefore, who are sincere in the practice of piety, earnestly endeavour to learn, after the apostolic example, “both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to

suffer need." (l) The Scripture has also a third rule, by which it regulates the use of earthly things; of which something was said, when we treated of the precepts of charity. For it states, that while all these things are given to us by the Divine goodness, and appointed for our benefit, they are as it were deposits entrusted to our care, of which we must one day give an account. We ought, therefore, to manage them in such a manner that this alarm may be incessantly sounding in our ears, "Give an account of thy stewardship." (m) Let it also be remembered by whom this account is demanded; that it is by him who hath so highly recommended abstinence, sobriety, frugality, and modesty; who abhors profusion, pride, ostentation, and vanity; who approves of no other management of his blessings, than such as is connected with charity; who hath with his own mouth already condemned all those pleasures which seduce the heart from chastity and purity, or tend to impair the understanding.

VI. Lastly, it is to be remarked, that the Lord commands every one of us, in all the actions of life, to regard his vocation. For he knows with what great inquietude the human mind is inflamed, with what desultory levity it is hurried hither and thither, and how insatiable is its ambition to grasp different things at once. Therefore, to prevent universal confusion being produced by our folly and temerity, he hath appointed to all their particular duties in different spheres of life. And that no one might rashly transgress the limits prescribed, he hath styled such spheres of life *vocations*, or *callings*. Every individual's line of life, therefore, is as it were a station assigned him by the Lord, that he may not wander about in uncertainty all his days. And so necessary is this distinction, that in his sight all our actions are estimated according to it, and often very differently from the sentence of human reason and philosophy. There is no exploit esteemed more honourable, even among philosophers, than to deliver our country from tyranny; but the voice of the celestial Judge openly condemns the private man who lays violent hands on a tyrant. It is not my design, however, to stay to enumerate examples. It is sufficient if

(l) Phil. iv. 12.

(m) Luke xxi. 2.

we know that the principle and foundation of right conduct in every case is the vocation of the Lord, and that he who disregards it will never keep the right way in the duties of his station. He may sometimes perhaps achieve something apparently laudable; but however it may appear in the eyes of men, it will be rejected at the throne of God; beside which, there will be no consistency between the various parts of his life. Our life, therefore, will then be best regulated, when it is directed to this mark; since no one will be impelled by his own temerity to attempt more than is compatible with his calling, because he will know that it is unlawful to transgress the bounds assigned him. He that is in obscurity will lead a private life without discontent, so as not to desert the station in which God hath placed him. It will also be no small alleviation of his cares, labours, troubles, and other burdens, when a man knows that in all these things he has God for his guide. The magistrate will execute his office with greater pleasure, the father of a family will confine himself to his duty with more satisfaction, and all in their respective spheres of life will bear and surmount the inconveniencies, cares, disappointments, and anxieties which befall them, when they shall be persuaded that every individual has his burden laid upon him by God. Hence also will arise peculiar consolation, since there will be no employment so mean and sordid (provided we follow our vocation) as not to appear truly respectable, and be deemed highly important in the sight of God.



CHAPTER XI.

Justification by Faith. The Name and Thing defined.

I THINK I have already explained with sufficient care, how that men, being subject to the curse of the law, have no means left of attaining salvation but through faith alone; and also what faith itself is, what Divine blessings it confers on man, and what effects it produces in him. The substance of what I have

advanced is, that Christ, being given to us by the goodness of God, is apprehended and possessed by us by faith, by a participation of whom we receive especially two benefits. In the first place, being by his innocence reconciled to God, we have in heaven a propitious Father instead of a judge; in the next place, being sanctified by his Spirit, we devote ourselves to innocence and purity of life. Of regeneration, which is the second benefit, I have said what I thought was sufficient. The method of justification has been but slightly touched, because it was necessary, first to understand that the faith, by which alone we attain gratuitous justification through the Divine mercy, is not unattended with good works, and what is the nature of the good works of the saints, in which part of this question consists. The subject of justification, therefore, must now be fully discussed, and discussed with the recollection that it is the principal hinge by which religion is supported, in order that we may apply to it with the greater attention and care. For unless we first of all apprehend, in what situation we stand with respect to God, and what his judgment is concerning us, we have no foundation either for a certainty of salvation or for the exercise of piety towards God. But the necessity of knowing this subject will be more evident from the knowledge itself.

II. But that we may not stumble at the threshold (which would be the case were we to enter on a disputation concerning a subject not understood by us) let us first explain the meaning of these expressions, *To be justified in the sight of God*, *To be justified by faith* or *by works*. He is said to be *justified in the sight of God*, who in the Divine judgment is reputed righteous, and accepted on account of his righteousness: for as iniquity is abominable to God, so no sinner can find favour in his sight, as a sinner, or so long as he is considered as such. Wherever sin is, therefore, it is accompanied with the wrath and vengeance of God. He is justified who is considered not as a sinner, but as a righteous person, and on that account stands in safety before the tribunal of God, where all sinners are confounded and ruined. As, if an innocent man be brought under an accusation before the tribunal of a just judge, when judgment is passed according to his innocence, he is said to be justified or acquitted before the judge; so he is justified before

God, who, not being numbered among sinners, has God for a witness and assertor of his righteousness. Thus he must be said, therefore, to be *justified by works*, whose life discovers such purity and holiness, as to deserve the character of righteousness before the throne of God; or who, by the integrity of his works, can answer and satisfy the Divine judgment. On the other hand, he will be *justified by faith*, who, being excluded from the righteousness of works, apprehends by faith the righteousness of Christ, invested in which, he appears, in the sight of God, not as a sinner, but as a righteous man. Thus we simply explain justification to be an acceptance, by which God receives us into his favour and esteems us as righteous persons; and we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ.

III. For the confirmation of this point there are many plain testimonies of Scripture. In the first place, that this is the proper and most usual signification of the word, cannot be denied. But since it would be too tedious to collect all the passages and compare them together, it shall suffice to have suggested it to the reader; for he will easily observe it of himself. I will only produce a few places, where this justification, which we speak of, is expressly handled. First, where Luke relates that “the people that heard Christ justified God;” and where Christ pronounces that “wisdom is justified of all her children:” (n) *To justify God*, in the former passage does not signify to confer righteousness, which always remains perfect in him, although the whole world endeavour to rob him of it; nor, in the latter passage, does *the justifying of wisdom* denote making the doctrine of salvation righteous, which is so of itself; but both passages imply an ascription to God and to his doctrine of the praise which they deserve. Again, when Christ reprehends the Pharisees for “justifying themselves,” (o) he does not mean that they attained righteousness by doing what was right, but that they ostentatiously endeavoured to gain the character of righteousness, of which they were destitute. This is better understood by persons who are skilled in the Hebrew language; which gives the appellation of *sinners* not only to

(n) Luke vii. 29, 35.

(o) Luke xvi. 15.

those who are conscious to themselves of sin, but to persons who fall under a sentence of condemnation. For Bathsheba, when she says "I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders," or sinners, (*p*) confesses no crime, but complains, that she and her son will be exposed to the disgrace of being numbered among condemned criminals. And it appears from the context, that this word, even in the translation, cannot be understood in any other than a relative sense, and that it does not denote the real character. But with respect to the present subject, where Paul says, "the Scripture foresaw that God would justify the heathen through faith," (*q*) what can we understand, but that God imputes righteousness through faith? Again, when he says that God "justifieth the ungodly which believeth in Jesus," (*r*) what can be the meaning, but that he delivers him by the blessing of faith from the condemnation deserved by his ungodliness? He speaks still more plainly in the conclusion, when he thus exclaims; "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who also maketh intercession for us." (*s*) For it is just as if he had said, Who shall accuse them whom God absolves? Who shall condemn those for whom Christ intercedes? Justification, therefore, is no other than an acquittal from guilt of of him who was accused, as though his innocence had been proved. Since God, therefore, justifies us through the mediation of Christ, he acquits us, not by an admission of our personal innocence, but by an imputation of righteousness: so that we, who are unrighteous in ourselves, are considered as righteous in Christ. This is the doctrine preached by Paul in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts; "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (*t*) We see that after remission of sins this justification is mentioned, as if by way of explanation: we see clearly that it means an acquittal; that it is separated from the works of the law; that it is a mere favour of Christ; that it is apprehended by faith: we see, finally, the interposition

(*p*) 1 Kings i. 21.(*q*) Gal. iii. 8.(*r*) Rom. iii. 26. iv. 5.(*s*) Rom. viii. 33, 34.(*t*) Acts xiii. 38, 39.

of a satisfaction, when he says that we are justified from sins by Christ. Thus when it is said that the publican "went down to his house justified," (*u*) we cannot say that he obtained righteousness by any merit of works. The meaning therefore is, that after he had obtained the pardon of his sins, he was considered as righteous in the sight of God. He was righteous, therefore, not through any approbation of his works, but through God's gracious absolution. Wherefore Ambrose elegantly styles confession of sins, a legitimate justification.

IV. But leaving all contention about the term, if we attend to the thing itself as it is described to us, every doubt will be removed. For Paul certainly describes justification as an acceptance, when he says to the Ephesians, "God hath predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted." (*w*) The meaning of this passage is the same as when in another place we are said to be "justified freely by his grace." (*x*) But in the fourth chapter to the Romans he first mentions an imputation of righteousness, and immediately represents it as consisting in remission of sins. "David," says he, "describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven," &c. (*y*) He there indeed argues not concerning a branch, but the whole of justification. He also adduces the definition of it given by David, when he pronounces them to be blessed who receive the free forgiveness of their sins: whence it appears, that this righteousness of which he speaks is simply opposed to guilt. But the most decisive passage of all on this point, is where he teaches us that the grand object of the ministry of the Gospel is, that we may "be reconciled to God," because he is pleased to receive us into his favour through Christ, "not imputing" our "trespasses unto" us. (*z*) Let the reader carefully examine the whole context; for when by way of explanation he just after adds, in order to describe the method of reconciliation that Christ "who knew no sin" was "made sin for us," (*a*) he undoubtedly means by the term "reconciliation,"

(*u*) Luke. xviii. 14.(*w*) Eph. i. 5, 6.(*x*) Rom. iii. 24.(*y*) Rom. iv. 6—8.(*z*) 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.(*a*) 2 Cor. v. 21.

no other than justification. Nor would there be any truth in what he affirms in another place, that we are "made righteous by the obedience of Christ," (b) unless we are reputed righteous before God, in him, and out of ourselves.

V. But since Oslander has introduced I know not what monstrous notion of essential righteousness, by which, though he had no intention to destroy justification by grace, yet he has involved it in such obscurity as darkens pious minds, and deprives them of a weighty sense of the grace of Christ; it will be worth while, before I pass to any thing else, to refute this idle notion. In the first place, this speculation is the mere fruit of insatiable curiosity. He accumulates, indeed, many testimonies of Scripture, to prove that Christ is one with us, and we one with him, of which there is no proof necessary; but for want of observing the bond of this union, he bewilders himself. For us, however, who know that we are united to Christ by the secret energy of his Spirit, it will be easy to obviate all his sophisms. He had conceived a notion similar to what was held by the Manichæans, so that he wished to transfuse the Divine essence into men. Hence another discovery of his, that Adam was formed in the image of God, because, even antecedently to the fall, Christ had been appointed the exemplar of the human nature. But, for the sake of brevity, I shall only insist on the subject now before us. He says that we are one with Christ. This we admit; but we at the same time deny that Christ's essence is blended with ours. In the next place, we assert that this principle, that Christ is our righteousness because he is the eternal God, the fountain of righteousness, and the essential righteousness of God, is grossly perverted to support his fallacies. The reader will excuse me, if I now just hint at these things, which the order of the treatise requires to be deferred to another place. But though he alleges in vindication of himself, that by the term *essential righteousness* he only intends to oppose the opinion that we are reputed righteous for the sake of Christ; yet he expressly declares, that, not being content with that righteousness which hath been procured for us by the obedience and sacrificial death of Christ, he imagines

that we are substantially righteous in God, by the infusion of his essence as well as his character. For this is the reason why he so vehemently contends, that not only Christ, but the Father and the Holy Spirit also dwell in us; which, though I allow it to be a truth, yet I maintain that he has grossly perverted. For he ought to have fully considered the nature of this inhabitation; namely, that the Father and the Spirit are in Christ: and that as "all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in him," (2) so in him we possess the whole Deity. Whatever, therefore, he advances concerning the Father and the Spirit separately, has no other tendency but to seduce the simple from Christ. In the next place, he introduces a mixture of substances, by which God, transfusing himself into us, makes us as it were a part of himself. For he considers it as of no importance, that the power of the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ, so that he becomes our head and we become his members, unless his essence be blended with ours. But when speaking of the Father and the Spirit, he more openly betrays his opinion; which is, that we are not justified by the sole grace of the Mediator, and that righteousness is not simply or really offered to us in his person; but that we are made partakers of the Divine righteousness when God is essentially united with us.

VI. If he had only said, that Christ in justifying us becomes ours by an essential union, and that he is our head not only as man, but that the essence of his Divine nature also is infused into us; he might have entertained himself with his fancies with less mischief, nor perhaps would so great a contention have been excited about this reverie. But as this principle is like a cuttlefish, which by the emission of black and turbid blood conceals its many tails, there is a necessity for a vigorous opposition to it, unless we mean to submit to be openly robbed of that righteousness which alone affords us any confidence concerning our salvation. For throughout this discussion, the terms *righteousness* and *justify* are extended by him to two things. First, he understands that "to be justified" denotes not only to be reconciled to God by a free pardon, but also to be made righteous; and that righteousness is not a gratuitous im-

putation, but a sanctity and integrity inspired by the Divine essence which resides in us. Secondly, he resolutely denies that Christ is our righteousness, as having in the character of a priest expiated our sins and appeased the Father on our behalf, but as being the eternal God and everlasting life. To prove the first assertion, that God justifies not only by pardoning, but also by regenerating, he inquires whether God leaves those, whom he justifies, in their natural state without any reformation of their manners. The answer is very easy; as Christ cannot be divided, so these two blessings, which we receive together in him, are also inseparable. Whomsoever therefore God receives into his favour, he likewise gives them the Spirit of adoption, by whose power he renews them in his own image. But if the brightness of the sun be inseparable from his heat, shall we therefore say that the earth is warmed by his light, and illuminated by his heat? Nothing can be more apposite to the present subject than this similitude. The beams of the sun quicken and fertilize the earth, his rays brighten and illuminate it. Here is a mutual and indivisible connection. Yet reason itself prohibits us to transfer to one what is peculiar to the other. In this confusion of two blessings which Osiander obtrudes on us, there is a similar absurdity. For as God actually renews to the practice of righteousness those whom he gratuitously accepts as righteous, Osiander confounds that gift of regeneration with this gracious acceptance, and contends that they are one and the same. But the Scripture, though it connects them together, yet enumerates them distinctly, that the manifold grace of God may be the more evident to us. For that passage of Paul is not superfluous; that "Christ is made unto us righteousness and sanctification." (a) And whenever he argues, from the salvation procured for us, from the paternal love of God, and from the grace of Christ, that we are called to holiness and purity, he plainly indicates that it is one thing, to be justified, and another thing, to be made new creatures. When Osiander appeals to the Scripture, he corrupts as many passages as he cites. The assertion of Paul, that "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righte-

(a) 1 Cor. i. 30.

ousness," (b) is explained by Osiander to denote making a man righteous. With the same temerity he corrupts the whole of that fourth chapter to the Romans, and hesitates not to impose the same false gloss on the passage just cited, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth:" where it is evident that the apostle is treating simply of accusation and absolution, and that his meaning wholly rests on the antithesis. His folly, therefore, betrays itself both in his arguments and in his citations of Scripture proofs. With no more propriety does he treat of the word righteousness, when he says, "that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness," because that after that, having embraced Christ (who is the righteousness of God, and God himself), he was eminent for the greatest virtues. Whence it appears, that of two good parts, he erroneously makes one corrupt whole; for the righteousness there mentioned does not belong to the whole course of Abraham's life; but rather the Spirit testifies that, notwithstanding the singular eminence of Abraham's virtues, and his advancement in them by long perseverance, yet he did not please God any otherwise than in receiving by faith the grace offered in the promise. Whence it follows, that in justification there is no regard paid to works, as Paul conclusively argues in that passage.

VII. His objection, that the power of justifying belongs not to faith of itself, but only as it receives Christ, I readily admit. For if faith were to justify of itself, or by an intrinsic efficacy, as it is expressed, being always weak and imperfect, it never could effect this but in part; and thus it would be a defective justification, which would only confer on us a partial salvation. Now we entertain no such notion as the objection supposes; on the contrary, we affirm that, strictly speaking, "it is God that justifies;" and then we transfer this to Christ, because he is given to us for righteousness. Faith we compare to a vessel; for unless we come empty with our mouths open to implore the grace of Christ, we cannot not receive Christ. Whence it may be inferred, that we do not detract from Christ the power of justifying, when we teach that faith receives him before it receives his righteousness.

Nevertheless I cannot admit the intricate comparisons of the sophist, when he says that faith is Christ; as though an earthen vessel were a treasure, because gold is concealed in it. For faith, although intrinsically it is of no dignity or value, justifies us by an application of Christ, just as a vessel full of money constitutes a man rich. Therefore I maintain that faith, which is only the instrument by which righteousness is received, cannot without absurdity be confounded with Christ, who is the material cause, and at once the author and dispenser of so great a benefit. We have now removed the difficulty, respecting the sense in which the word ought to be understood, when it is applied to justification.

VIII. Respecting the reception of Christ he goes still greater lengths; asserting that the internal word is received by the ministry of the external word, by which he would divert us from the priesthood of Christ and the person of the Mediator, to his eternal divinity. We do not divide Christ, but we maintain that the same person, who by reconciling us to the Father in his own flesh hath given us righteousness, is the eternal Word of God: and we confess that he could not otherwise have discharged the office of Mediator, and procured righteousness for us, if he were not the eternal God. But the opinion of Oslander is, that since Christ is both God and man, he is made righteousness to us, in respect of his Divine, not his human nature. Now if this properly belong to the Divinity, it will not be peculiar to Christ, but common also to the Father and the Spirit; since the righteousness of one is the same as that of the others. Besides, what has been naturally eternal, cannot with propriety be said to be "made unto us." But though we grant that God is made righteousness unto us, how will it agree with the clause which is inserted, that "of God," he "is made unto us righteousness?" This is certainly peculiar to the character of the Mediator, who though he contains in himself the Divine nature, yet is designated by this appropriate title, by which he is distinguished from the Father and the Spirit. But he ridiculously triumphs in that single expression of Jeremiah, where he promises that "the Lord," *Jehovah*, will be "our righteousness." (c) He can deduce nothing from this, but that

Christ, who is our righteousness, is God manifested in the flesh. We have elsewhere recited from Paul's sermon, that "God hath purchased the Church with his own blood." (*d*) If any should infer from this, that the blood, by which our sins were expiated, was Divine, and part of the Divine nature, who could bear so monstrous an error? But Osiander thinks he has gained every thing by this very puerile cavil; he swells, exults, and fills many pages with his swelling words, though the passage is simply and readily explained, by saying that Jehovah, when he should become the seed of David, would be the righteousness of the pious: and in the same sense Isaiah informs us, "by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." (*e*) Let us remark, that the speaker here is the Father; that he attributes to his Son the office of justifying; that he adds as a reason, that he is righteous; and that he places the mode or means of effecting this, in the doctrine by which Christ is made known. For it is more suitable to understand the word **רַעַי** in a passive sense. Hence I conclude, first, that Christ was made righteousness when he assumed the form of a servant; secondly, that he justified us by his own obedience to the Father; and therefore that he did this for us, not according to his Divine nature, but by reason of the dispensation committed to him. For though God alone is the fountain of righteousness, and we are righteous only by a participation of him; yet, because we have been alienated from his righteousness through the unhappy breach occasioned by the fall, we are under the necessity of descending to this inferior remedy, to be justified by Christ, by the efficacy of his death and resurrection.

IX. If Osiander object, that the excellence of this work surpasses the nature of man, and therefore can be ascribed only to the Divine nature; the former part of the objection I admit, but in the latter I maintain that he is grossly mistaken. For although Christ could neither purify our souls with his blood, nor appease the Father by his sacrifice, nor absolve us from guilt, nor in short perform the functions of a priest, if he were not truly God, because human power would have been unequal to so great a burden; yet it is certain that he performed all these

(*d*) Acts xx. 28.(*e*) Isaiah liii. 11.

things in his human nature.] For if it be inquired, How are we justified? Paul replies, "By the obedience of" Christ. (*f*) But has he obeyed in any other way than by assuming the form of a servant? Hence we infer, that righteousness is presented to us in his flesh. In the other passage also, which I much wonder that Osiander is not ashamed to quote so frequently, Paul places the source of righteousness wholly in the humanity of Christ. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (*g*) Osiander lays great stress on "the righteousness of God," and triumphs as though he had evinced it to be his notion of essential righteousness; whereas the words convey a very different idea,—that we are righteous through the expiation effected by Christ. That "the righteousness of God" means that which God approves, ought to have been known to the youngest novices; just as in John "the praise of God" is opposed to "the praise of men." (*h*) I know that "the righteousness of God" sometimes denotes that of which he is the author, and which he bestows upon us; but, without any observation of mine, the judicious reader will perceive that the meaning of this passage is only, that we stand before the tribunal of God supported by the atoning death of Christ. Nor is the term of such great importance, provided that Osiander coincides with us in this, that we are justified in Christ, inasmuch as he was made an expiatory sacrifice for us; which is altogether incompatible with his Divine nature. For this reason, when Christ designs to seal the righteousness and salvation which he has presented to us, he exhibits a certain pledge of it in his flesh. He calls himself indeed "living bread;" but adds, by ways of explanation, "my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." This method of instruction is discovered in the sacraments; which, although they direct our faith to the whole of the person of Christ, not to a part of him only, yet they at the same time teach that the matter of justification and salvation resides in his human nature; not that he either justifies or vivifies, of himself, as a mere man, but because it hath pleased God to manifest in the Mediator, that which was incomprehensible

(*f*) Rom. v. 19.(*g*) 2 Cor. v. 21.(*h*) John xii. 43.

and hidden in himself. Wherefore I am accustomed to say, that Christ is as it were a fountain opened to us, whence we may draw what were otherwise concealed and useless in that secret and deep fountain which flows to us in the person of the Mediator. In this manner, and in this sense, provided he will submit to the clear and forcible arguments which I have adduced, I do not deny that Christ justifies us, as he is God and man, and that this work is common also to the Father and the Spirit; and, finally, that the righteousness, of which Christ makes us partakers, is the eternal righteousness of the eternal God.

X. Moreover, that his cavils may not deceive the inexperienced, I confess that we are destitute of this incomparable blessing, till Christ becomes ours. I attribute, therefore, the highest importance to the connection between the head and members, to the inhabitation of Christ in our hearts, in a word, to the mystical union by which we enjoy him, so that being made ours, he makes us partakers of the blessings with which he is furnished. We do not, then, contemplate him at a distance out of ourselves, that his righteousness may be imputed to us: but because we have put him on, and are ingrafted into his body, and because he hath deigned to unite us to himself, therefore we glory in a participation of his righteousness. Thus we refute the cavil of Osiander, that faith is considered by us as righteousness; as though we despoiled Christ of his right, when we affirm, that by faith we come to him empty, that he alone may fill us with his grace. But Osiander despising this spiritual connection, insists on a gross mixture of Christ with believers; and therefore invidiously gives the appellation of Zuinglians to all who do not subscribe to his fanatical error concerning essential righteousness, because they are not of opinion that Christ is substantially eaten in the sacred supper. As for myself, indeed, I consider it the highest honour to be thus reproached by a man so proud and so absorbed in his own delusions; although he attacks not me alone, but other writers well known in the world, whom he ought to have treated with modest respect. But this does not at all affect me, who am supporting no private interest; wherefore, I the more unreservedly advocate this cause, conscious that I am free from every

sinister motive. His great importunity in insisting on essential righteousness, and an essential inhabitation of Christ in us, goes to this length; first, that God transfuses himself into us by a gross mixture of himself with us, as he pretends that there is a carnal eating in the sacred supper; secondly, that God inspires his righteousness into us, by which we are really righteous with him; since, according to this man, such righteousness is as really God himself, as the goodness, or holiness, or perfection of God. I shall not take much trouble to refute the testimonies adduced by him, which he violently perverts from the celestial to the present state. By Christ, says Peter, "are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature." (i) As though we were now such as the gospel promises we shall be at the second advent of Christ; for John apprises us, that "we shall be like God; for we shall see him as he is." (k) I have thought proper to give the reader only a small specimen, and endeavoured to pass over these impertinencies, not that it is difficult to refute them, but because I am unwilling to be tedious in labouring to no purpose.

XI. There is yet more latent poison in the second particular, in which he maintains, that we are righteous together with God. I think I have already sufficiently demonstrated, that although this dogma were not so pestiferous, yet because it is weak and unsatisfactory, and evaporates through its own inanity, it ought justly to be rejected by all judicious and pious readers. But this is an impiety not to be tolerated; under the pretext of a twofold righteousness to weaken the assurance of salvation, and to elevate us above the clouds, that we may not embrace by faith the grace of expiation, and call upon God with tranquillity of mind. Osiander ridicules those who say that justification is a forensic term, because it is necessary for us to be actually righteous: nor is there any thing that he more dislikes than the doctrine that we are justified by gratuitous imputation. Now if God do not justify by absolving and pardoning us, what is the meaning of this declaration of Paul? "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. For he hath made him to

(i) 2 Peter i. 4.

(k) 1 John iii. 2.

he sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (*l*) First, I find, that they are accounted righteous who are reconciled to God: the manner is specified, that God justifies by pardoning: just as in another passage, justification is opposed to accusation; which antithesis clearly demonstrates, that the form of expression is borrowed from the practice of courts. Nor is there any one, but tolerably versed in the Hebrew language, provided at the same time that he be in his sound senses, who can be ignorant that this is the original of the phrase, and that this is its import and meaning. Now let Osiander answer me whether, where Paul says that "David describeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven," (*m*) whether, I say, this be a complete definition or a partial one. Certainly Paul does not adduce the testimony of the Psalmist, as teaching that pardon of sins is a part of righteousness, or concurs to the justification of a man; but he includes the whole of righteousness in a free remission, pronouncing, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." He thence estimates and judges of the felicity of such a man, because in this way he becomes righteous, not actually, but by imputation. Osiander objects, that it would be dishonourable to God and contrary to his nature, if he justified them who still remain actually impious. But it should be remembered that, as I have already observed, the grace of justification is inseparable from regeneration, although they are distinct things. But since it is sufficiently known from experience, that some reliques of sin always remain in the righteous, the manner of their justification must of necessity be very different from that of their renovation to newness of life. For the latter God commences in his elect, and as long as they live carries it on gradually, and sometimes slowly, so that they are always obnoxious at his tribunal to the sentence of death. He justifies them, however, not in a partial manner, but so completely, that they may boldly appear in heaven, as being invested with the purity of Christ. For no portion of righteousness could satisfy our consciences,

(*l*) 2 Cor. v. 19, 21(*m*) Rom. iv, 6—8.

till we have ascertained that God is pleased with us, as being unexceptionably righteous before him. Whence it follows, that the doctrine of justification is perverted and totally overturned, when doubts are injected into the mind, when the confidence of salvation is shaken, when bold and fearless worship is interrupted, and when quiet and tranquillity with spiritual joy are not established. Whence Paul argues from the incompatibility of things contrary to each other, that the inheritance is not of the law, because then faith would be rendered vain; (*n*) which, if it be fixed upon works, must inevitably fall; since not even the most holy of all saints will find them afford any ground of confidence. This difference between justification and regeneration (which Osiander confounds together, and denominates a twofold righteousness), is beautifully expressed by Paul: for, speaking of his real righteousness, or of the integrity which he possessed, to which Osiander gives the appellation of essential righteousness, he sorrowfully exclaims, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (*o*) But resorting to the righteousness which is founded in the Divine mercy alone, he nobly triumphs over life and death, and reproaches, and famine, and the sword, and all adverse things and persons. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. For I am persuaded, that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (*p*) He plainly declares himself to be possessed of that righteousness, which alone is fully sufficient for salvation in the sight of God; so that the miserable servitude, in a consciousness of which he was just before bewailing his condition, neither diminishes, nor in the smallest degree interrupts, the confidence with which he triumphs. This diversity is sufficiently known, and is even familiar to all the saints, who groan under the burden of their iniquities, and yet with victorious confidence rise superior to every fear. But the objection of Osiander, that it is incongruous to the nature of God, recoils upon himself; for, although he invests the saints with a twofold righteousness, as with a garment covered with skins, he is, notwithstanding, constrain-

(*n*) Gal. iii. 18.(*o*) Rom. vii. 24.(*p*) Rom. viii. 33, 38, 39.

ed to acknowledge that no man can please God without the remission of his sins. If this be true, he should at least grant that they who are not actually righteous are accounted righteous, in proportion, as it is expressed, to the degree of imputation. But how far shall a sinner extend this gracious acceptance, which is substituted in the place of righteousness? Shall he estimate it by the weight? Truly he will be in great uncertainty to which side to incline the balance; because he will not be able to assume to himself as much righteousness as may be necessary to his confidence. It is well that he, who would wish to prescribe laws to God, is not the arbiter of this cause. But this address of David to God will remain; "That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." (q) And what extreme arrogance it is to condemn the supreme Judge when he freely absolves, and not to be satisfied with this answer, "I will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." (r) And yet the intercession of Moses, which God checked with this reply, was not that he would spare none, but that though they were guilty he would remove their guilt and absolve them all at once. We affirm, therefore, that those who were undone are justified before God by the obliteration of their sins; because, sin being the object of his hatred, he can love none but those whom he justifies. [But this is a wonderful method of justification, that sinners being invested with the righteousness of Christ, dread not the judgment which they have deserved; and that, while they justly condemn themselves, they are accounted righteous out of themselves.]

XII. But the readers must be cautioned to pay a strict attention to the mystery which Osiander boasts that he will not conceal from them. For, after having contended with great prolixity, that we do not obtain favour with God solely through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, because it would be impossible for him to esteem them as righteous who are not so, (I use his own words); he at length concludes, that Christ is given to us for righteousness, not in respect of his human, but of his Divine nature; and that, though this righteousness can only be found in the person of the Mediator, yet it is the

(q) Psalm li. 4.

(r) Exod. xxxiii. 19.

righteousness, not of man, but of God. He does not combine two righteousnesses, but evidently deprives the humanity of Christ of all concern in the matter of justification. It is worth while, however, to hear what arguments he adduces. It is said in the passage referred to, that "Christ is made unto us wisdom," (s) which is applicable only to the eternal Word. Neither, therefore, is Christ our righteousness considered as man. I reply, that the only-begotten Son of God was, indeed, his eternal wisdom; but this title is here ascribed to him by Paul in a different sense, because "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (t) What therefore he had with the Father, he hath manifested to us; and so what Paul says, refers not to the essence of the Son of God, but to our benefit, and is rightly applied to the humanity of Christ; because, although he was a light shining in darkness before his assumption of the flesh, yet he was a hidden light, till he appeared in the nature of man "as the Sun of righteousness;" (u) wherefore he calls himself "the light of the world." (w) Osiander betrays his folly likewise in objecting, that justification exceeds the power of angels and men: since it depends not upon the dignity of any creature, but upon the appointment of God. If angels were desirous to offer a satisfaction to God, it would be unavailing; because they have not been appointed to it. This was peculiar to the man Christ, who was "made under the law, to redeem us from the curse of the law." (x) He likewise very unjustly accuses those, who deny that Christ is our righteousness according to his Divine nature, of retaining only one part of Christ, and (what is worse) making two Gods; because, though they acknowledge that God dwells in us, yet they flatly deny that we are righteous through the righteousness of God. For if we call Christ the author of life in consequence of his having suffered death, "that he might destroy him that had the power of death," (y) it is not to be inferred that we deny this honour to his complete person, as God manifested in the flesh: we only state with precision the means by which the righteousness of God is conveyed to us, so that we may enjoy it. In this, Osiander has fallen into a very pernicious error.

(s) 1 Cor. i. 30.

(t) Col. ii. 3.

(u) Mal. iv. 2.

(w) John viii. 12.

(x) Gal. iii. 13. iv. 4.

(y) Heb. ii. 14.

We do not deny, that what is openly exhibited to us in Christ flows from the secret grace and power of God; nor do we refuse to admit, that the righteousness conferred on us by Christ is the righteousness of God as proceeding from him; but we constantly maintain that we have righteousness and life in the death and resurrection of Christ. I pass over that shameful accumulation of passages, with which, without any discrimination, and even without common sense, he has burdened the reader, in order to evince, that wherever mention is made of righteousness, it ought to be understood of this essential righteousness: as where David implores the righteousness of God to assist him; which, as he does above a hundred times, Osiander hesitates not to pervert such a great number of passages. Nor is there any thing more solid in his other objection, that the term "righteousness" is properly and rightly applied to that by which we are excited to rectitude of conduct, and that God alone "worketh in us both to will and to do." (z) Now we do not deny, that God renews us by his Spirit to holiness and righteousness of life; but it should first be inquired, whether he does this immediately by himself, or through the medium of his Son, with whom he hath deposited all the plenitude of his Spirit, that with his abundance he might relieve the necessities of his members. Besides, though righteousness flows to us from the secret fountain of the Divinity, yet it does not follow that Christ, who in the flesh sanctified himself for our sakes, (a) is our righteousness with respect to his Divine nature. Equally frivolous is his assertion, that Christ himself was righteous with the righteousness of God; because if he had not been influenced by the will of the Father, not even he could have performed the part assigned him. For though it has been elsewhere observed, that all the merit of Christ himself flows from the mere favour of God, yet this affords no countenance to the fanciful notion with which Osiander fascinates his own eyes and those of the injudicious. For who would admit the inference, that because God is the original source of our righteousness, we are therefore essentially righteous, and have the essence of the Divine righteousness residing

(z) Phil. ii. 13.

(a) John xvii. 19.

in us? In redeeming the Church (Isaiah says) God "put on righteousness as a breastplate;" (b) but was it to spoil Christ of the armour which he had given him, and to prevent his being a perfect Redeemer? The prophet only meant that God borrowed nothing extrinsic to himself, and had no assistance in the work of our redemption. Paul has briefly intimated the same in other words, saying that he hath given us salvation in order "to declare his righteousness." (c) Nor does this at all contradict what he states in another place, "that by the obedience of one we are made righteous." (d) To conclude, Whoever fabricates a twofold righteousness, that wretched souls may not rely wholly and exclusively on the Divine mercy, makes Christ an object of contempt, and crowns him with platted thorns.

XIII. But as many persons imagine righteousness to be composed of faith and works, let us also prove, before we proceed, that the righteousness of faith is so exceedingly different from that of works, that if one be established the other must necessarily be subverted. The apostle says, "I count all things but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (e) Here we see a comparison of two opposites, and an implication that his own righteousness must be forsaken by him who wishes to obtain the righteousness of Christ. Wherefore, in another place, he states this to have been the cause of the ruin of the Jews, that, "going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." (f) If, by establishing our own righteousness, we reject the righteousness of God; then, in order to obtain the latter, the former must doubtless be entirely renounced. He conveys the same sentiment, when he asserts, that "boasting is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." (g) Whence it follows, that as long as there remains the least particle of righteousness in our works, we retain some cause for boasting. But if faith excludes all boasting, the righteousness of works

(b) Isaiah lix. 17.

(c) Rom. iii. 24, 25.

(d) Rom. v. 19.

(e) Phil. iii. 8, 9.

(f) Rom. x. 3.

(g) Rom. iii. 27.

can by no means be associated with the righteousness of faith. To this purpose he speaks so clearly in the fourth chapter to the Romans, as to leave no room for cavil or uncertainty: "If Abraham (says he) were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory." He adds, "but" he hath "not" whereof to glory "before God." (h) It follows, therefore, that he was not justified by works. Then he advances another argument from two opposites. "To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." (i) But righteousness is attributed to faith through grace. Therefore it is not from the merit of works. Adieu, therefore, to the fanciful notion of those who imagine a righteousness compounded of faith and works.

XIV. The sophists, who amuse and delight themselves with perversion of the Scripture and vain cavils, think they have found a most excellent subterfuge, when they explain *works* in these passages to mean those which men yet unregenerate perform without the grace of Christ, merely through the unassisted efforts of their own free-will; and deny that they relate to spiritual works. Thus, according to them, a man is justified both by faith and by works, only the works are not properly his own, but the gifts of Christ and the fruits of regeneration. For they say that Paul spoke in this manner, only that the Jews, who relied on their own strength, might be convinced of their folly in arrogating righteousness to themselves, whereas it is conferred on us solely by the Spirit of Christ, not by any exertion properly our own. But they do not observe, that in the contrast of legal and evangelical righteousness, which Paul introduces in another place, all works are excluded, by what title soever they may be distinguished. For he teaches that this is the righteousness of the law, that he who has fulfilled the command of the law shall obtain salvation; (k) but that the righteousness of faith consists in believing that Christ hath died and is risen again, (l) Besides, we shall see, as we proceed, in its proper place, that sanctification and righteousness are separate blessings of Christ. Whence it follows, that even spiritual works are not taken into the account, when the power of justifying is attributed to faith. And the assertion of Paul, in the place just

(h) Rom. iv. 2. (i) Rom. iv. 4. (k) Rom. x. 5, &c. (l) Gal. iii. 11.

cited, that Abraham hath not whereof to glory before God, since he was not justified by works, ought not to be restricted to any literal appearance or external display of virtue, or to any efforts of free-will: but though the life of the patriarch was spiritual and almost angelic, yet his works did not possess sufficient merit to justify him before God.

XV. The errors of the schoolmen who mingle their preparations, are rather more gross; but they instil into the simple and incautious a doctrine equally corrupt, while under the pretext of the Spirit and of grace, they conceal the mercy of God, which alone can calm the terrors of the conscience. We confess, indeed, with Paul, that "the doers of the law are justified before God;" (*m*) but since are all far from being observers of the law, we conclude, that those works which should be principally available to justification, afford us no assistance, because we are destitute of them. With respect to the common papists, or schoolmen, they are in this matter doubly deceived; both in denominating faith, a certainty of conscience in expecting from God a reward of merit, and in explaining the grace of God to be, not an imputation of gratuitous righteousness, but the Spirit assisting to the pursuit of holiness. They read in the apostle, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (*n*) But they do not consider the manner of seeking him. And that they mistake the sense of the word "grace," is evident from their writings. For Lombard represents justification by Christ as given us in two ways. He says, "The death of Christ justifies us, first, because it excites charity in our hearts, by which we are made actually righteous; secondly, because it destroys sin, by which the devil held us in captivity, so that now it cannot condemn us." We see how he considers the grace of God in justification to consist in our being directed to good works by the grace of the Holy Spirit. He wished, indeed, to follow the opinion of Augustine: but he follows him at a great distance, and even deviates considerably from a close imitation of him; for, whatever he finds clearly stated by him, he obscures; and whatever he finds pure in him, he corrupts. The schools have

(*m*) Rom. ii. 13.

(*n*) Heb. xi. 6.

always been running into worse and worse errors, till at length they have precipitated themselves into the abyss of Pelagianism. Nor, indeed, is the opinion of Augustine, or at least his manner of expression, to be altogether admitted. For though he excellently despoils man of all the praise of righteousness, and ascribes the whole to the grace of God; yet he refers grace to sanctification, in which we are regenerated by the Spirit to newness of life.

XVI. The Scripture, when speaking of the righteousness of faith, leads us to something very different. It teaches us, that being diverted from the contemplation of our own works, we should regard nothing but the mercy of God and the perfection of Christ. For it states this to be the order of justification; that from the beginning God deigns to embrace sinful man with his pure and gratuitous goodness, contemplating nothing in him to excite mercy, but his misery; for God beholds him utterly destitute of all good works, deriving from himself the motive for blessing him; that he affects the sinner himself with a sense of his supreme goodness, who, losing all confidence in his own works, rests the whole of his salvation on the Divine mercy. This is the sentiment of faith, by which the sinner comes to the enjoyment of his salvation, when he knows from the doctrine of the Gospel that he is reconciled to God; that having obtained remission of sins, he is justified by the intervention of the righteousness of Christ; and though regenerated by the Spirit of God, he thinks on everlasting righteousness reserved for him, not in the good works to which he devotes himself, but solely in the righteousness of Christ. When all these things shall have been particularly examined, they will afford a perspicuous explication of our opinion. They will, however, be better digested in a different order from that in which they have been proposed. But it is of little importance, provided they are so connected with each other, that we may have the whole subject rightly stated and well confirmed.

XVII. Here it is proper to recal to remembrance the relation we have before stated between faith and the gospel; since the reason why faith is said to justify, is, that it receives and embraces the righteousness offered in the gospel. But its being offered by the gospel absolutely excludes all consideration of

works. This Paul very clearly demonstrates on various occasions; and particularly in two passages in his Epistle to the Romans, contrasting the law and the gospel, he says; "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (*o*) Do we perceive how he thus discriminates between the law and the gospel, that the former attributes righteousness to works, but the latter bestows it freely without the assistance of works? It is a remarkable passage, and may serve to extricate us from a multitude of difficulties, if we understand that the righteousness which is given us by the gospel is free from all legal conditions. This is the reason why he more than once strongly opposes the *promise* to the *law*. "If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise;" (*p*) and more in the same chapter to the same purpose. It is certain that the law also has its promises. Wherefore, unless we will confess the comparison to be improper, there must be something distinct and different in the promises of the gospel. Now what can that be, but that they are gratuitous and solely dependent on the Divine mercy, whilst the promises of the law depend on the condition of works? Nor let any one object, that it is only the righteousness which men would obtrude on God from their own natural powers and free-will that is rejected: since Paul teaches it as a universal truth, that the precepts of the law are unprofitable, because, not only among the vulgar, but even among the very best of men, there is not one who can fulfil them. (*q*) Love is certainly the principal branch of the law: when the Spirit of God forms us to it, why does it not constitute any part of our righteousness, but because even in the saints it is imperfect, and therefore of itself deserves no reward?

XVIII. The other passage is as follows: "That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith; but, The

(*o*) Rom. x. 5, 6, 9.(*p*) Gal. iii. 18.(*q*) Rom. iii. 10, &c.

man that doeth them shall live in them.”(r) How could this argument be supported, unless it were certain that works do not come into the account of faith, but are to be entirely separated from it? The law, he says, differs from faith. Why? Because works are required to the righteousness of the law. It follows, therefore, that works are not required to the righteousness of faith. From this statement it appears, that they who are justified by faith, are justified without the merit of works, and beyond the merit of works: for faith receives that righteousness which the gospel bestows; and the gospel differs from the law in this respect, that it does not confine righteousness to works, but rests it entirely on the mercy of God. He argues in a similar manner to the Romans, that “Abraham had not whereof to glory; for he believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness:”(s) and by way of confirmation he subjoins, that then there is room for the righteousness of faith when there are no works which merit any reward. He tells us, that where there are works they receive a reward “of debt,” but that what is given to faith is “of grace;” for this is the clear import of the language which he there uses. When he adds a little after, “Therefore it is of faith” that we obtain the inheritance, in order “that it might be by grace,”(t) he infers that the inheritance is gratuitous, because it is received by faith: and why is this, but because faith, without any assistance of works, depends wholly on the Divine mercy? And in the same sense undoubtedly he elsewhere teaches us, that “the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and prophets:”(u) because, by excluding the law, he denies that righteousness is assisted by works, or that we obtain it by working, but asserts that we come empty in order to receive it.

XIX. The reader will now discover, with what justice the sophists of the present day cavil at our doctrine, when we say *that a man is justified by faith only*. That a man is justified *by faith*, they do not deny, because the Scripture so often declares it; but since it is no where expressly said to be by faith *only*, they cannot bear this addition to be made. But what reply will they give to these words of Paul, where he contends that

(r) Gal. iii. 11, 12. (s) Rom. iv. 2, 3. (t) Rom. iv. 16. (u) Rom. iii. 21.

“righteousness is not of faith unless it be gratuitous?” (w) How can any thing gratuitous consist with works? And by what cavils will they elude what he asserts in another place, that in the gospel “is the righteousness of God revealed?” (x) If righteousness is revealed in the gospel, it is certainly not a mutilated and partial, but a complete and perfect one. The law, therefore, has no concern in it. And respecting this exclusive particle, *only*, they rest on an evasion which is not only false, but glaringly ridiculous. For does not he most completely attribute every thing to faith alone, who denies every thing to works? What is the meaning of these expressions of Paul? “Righteousness is manifested without the law,” “justified freely by his grace,” “justified without the deeds of the law.” (y) Here they have an ingenious subterfuge, which, though it is not of their own invention, but borrowed from Origen and some of the ancients, is nevertheless very absurd. They pretend that the works excluded are the ceremonial works of the law, not the moral works. They have made such a proficiency by their perpetual disputations, that they have forgotten the first elements of logic. Do they suppose the apostle to have been insane, when he adduced these passages in proof of his doctrine? “The man that doeth them shall live in them;” and “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” (z) If they be in their sober senses, they will not assert that life was promised to the observers of ceremonies and the curse denounced merely on the transgressors of them. If these places are to be understood of the moral law, it is beyond a doubt, that moral works likewise are excluded from the power to justify. To the same purpose are these arguments which he uses; “For by the law is the knowledge of sin,” consequently not righteousness. “Because the law worketh wrath,” (a) therefore not righteousness. Since the law cannot assure our consciences, neither can it confer righteousness. Since faith is counted for righteousness, consequently righteousness is not a reward of works, but is gratuitously bestowed. Since we are justified by faith, boasting is

(w) Rom. iv. 2.

(x) Rom. i. 17.

(y) Rom. iii. 21, 24, 28.

(z) Gal. iii. 10, 12.

(a) Rom. iii. 20. iv. 15.

precluded. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." (b) Let them idly pretend, if they dare, that these are applicable to ceremonies, not to morals: but even children would explode such consummate impudence. We may therefore be assured, that when the power of justifying is denied to the law, the whole law is included.

XX. If any one should wonder why the apostle does not content himself with simply mentioning *works*, but says *works of the law*, the reason is obvious. For though works are so greatly esteemed, they derive their value from the Divine approbation rather than from any intrinsic excellence. For who can dare to boast to God of any righteousness of works, but what he hath approved? Who can dare to claim any reward as due to them, but what he hath promised? It is owing therefore to the Divine favour, that they are accounted worthy both of the title and of the reward of righteousness; and so they are valuable, only when they are intended as acts of obedience to God. Wherefore the apostle in another place, in order to prove that Abraham could not be justified by works, alleges, that "the law was four hundred and thirty years after the covenant was confirmed." (c) Ignorant persons would ridicule such an argument, because there might have been righteous works before the promulgation of the law; but knowing that works have no such intrinsic worth, independently of the testimony and esteem of God, he has taken it for granted that, antecedently to the law, they had no power to justify. We know why he expressly mentions "the works of the law," when he means to deny justification by works; it is because they alone can furnish any occasion of controversy. However, he likewise excludes all works, without any limitation, as when he says, "David describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." (d) They cannot, therefore, by any subtilties prevent us from retaining this general exclusive particle. It is in vain also, that they catch at another frivolous subtilty, alleging that

(b) Gal. iii. 21, 22.

(c) Gal. iii. 17.

(d) Rom. iv. 6.

we are justified only by that "faith which worketh by love;" (e) with a view to represent righteousness as depending on love. We acknowledge indeed with Paul, that no other faith justifies, except that "which worketh by love;" but it does not derive its power to justify from the efficacy of that love. It justifies, in no other way than as it introduces us into a participation of the righteousness of Christ. Otherwise there would be no force in the argument so strenuously urged by the apostle. "To him that worketh," says he, "is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (f) Was it possible for him to speak more plainly than by thus asserting, that there is no righteousness of faith, except where there are no works intitled to any reward; and that faith is imputed for righteousness, only when righteousness is conferred through unmerited grace?

XXI. Now let us examine the truth of what has been asserted in the definition, that the righteousness of faith is a reconciliation with God, which consists solely in remission of sins. (g) We must always return to this axiom, That the Divine wrath remains on all men, as long as they continue to be sinners. This Isaiah has elegantly expressed in the following words; "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." (h) We are informed, that sin makes a division between man and God, and turns the Divine countenance away from the sinner. Nor can it be otherwise; because it is incompatible with his righteousness to have any commerce with sin. Hence the apostle teaches, that man is an enemy to God, till he be reconciled to him by Christ. (i) Whom therefore the Lord receives into fellowship with him, him he is said to justify; because he cannot receive any one into favour or into fellowship with himself, without making him from a sinner to be a righteous person. This, we add, is accomplished by the remission of sins. For if they, whom the Lord hath reconciled to himself, be judged according to their

(e) Gal. v. 6.

(f) Rom. iv. 4, 5.

(g) Sect. II.

(h) Isaiah lix. 1, 2.

(i) Rom. v. 8—10.

works, they will still be found actually sinners; who notwithstanding, must be absolved and free from sin. It appears then, that those whom God receives, are made righteous no otherwise, than as they are purified by being cleansed from all their defilements by the remission of their sins: so that such a righteousness may, in one word, be denominated, a remission of sins.

XXII. Both these points are fully established by the language of Paul, which I have already recited. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." (*k*) Then he adds the substance of his ministry; "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (*l*) The terms "righteousness" and "reconciliation" are here used by him indiscriminately, to teach us that they are mutually comprehended in each other. And he states the manner of obtaining this righteousness to consist in our transgressions not being imputed to us. Wherefore we can no longer doubt how God justifies, when we hear that he reconciles us to himself by not imputing our sins to us. Thus in the Epistle to the Romans the apostle proves, that "God imputeth righteousness without works," from the testimony of David, who declares, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (*m*) By "blessedness" in this passage, he undoubtedly means righteousness; for since he asserts it to consist in remission of sins, there is no reason for our adopting any other definition of it. Wherefore Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, places "the knowledge of salvation" in "the remission of sins." (*n*) And Paul, observing the same rule in the sermon which he preached to the people of Antioch on the subject of salvation, is related by Luke to have concluded in the following manner: "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (*o*) The apostle thus connects "forgiveness of sins"

(*k*) 2 Cor. v. 19.

(*l*) 2 Cor. v. 21.

(*m*) Rom. iv. 6—8.

(*n*) Luke i. 77.

(*o*) Acts xiii. 38, 39.

with "justification," to shew that they are identically the same; whence he justly argues, that this righteousness which we obtain through the favour of God is gratuitously bestowed upon us. Nor should it be thought a strange expression, that the faithful are justified before God not by their works, but by his gracious acceptance of them; since it occurs so frequently in the Scripture, and sometimes also in the Fathers. Augustine says, "The righteousness of the saints in this world, consists rather in the remission of their sins than in the perfection of their virtues." With which corresponds the remarkable observation of Bernard: "Not to sin at all, is the righteousness of God; but the righteousness of man, is the Divine grace and mercy." He had before asserted, "that Christ is righteousness to us in absolution, and therefore that they alone are righteous who have obtained pardon through his mercy."

XXIII. Hence also it is evident, that we obtain justification before God, solely by the intervention of the righteousness of Christ. Which is equivalent to saying, that a man is righteous, not in himself, but because the righteousness of Christ is communicated to him by imputation; and this is a point which deserves an attentive consideration. For it supersedes that idle notion, that a man is justified by faith, because faith receives the Spirit of God by whom he is made righteous; which is too repugnant to the foregoing doctrine, ever to be reconcileable to it. For he must certainly be destitute of all righteousness of his own, who is taught to seek a righteousness out of himself. This is most clearly asserted by the apostle when he says, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (p) We see that our righteousness is not in ourselves, but in Christ; and that all our title to it, rests solely on our being partakers of Christ; for in possessing him, we possess all his riches with him. Nor does any objection arise from what he states in another place, that "God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us;" (q) where he intends no other fulfilment than what we obtain by imputa-

(p) Cor. v. 21.

(q) Rom. viii. 3; 4.

tion. For the Lord Christ so communicates his righteousness to us, that with reference to the Divine judgment, he transfuses its virtue into us in a most wonderful manner. That the apostle intended no other, abundantly appears from another declaration, which he had made just before; "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (r) What is placing our righteousness in the obedience of Christ, but asserting, that we are accounted righteous only because his obedience is accepted for us as if it were our own? Wherefore, Ambrose appears to me to have very beautifully exemplified this righteousness in the benediction of Jacob: that as he, who had on his own account no claim to the privileges of primogeniture, being concealed in his brother's habit and invested with his garment, which diffused a most excellent odour, insinuated himself into the favour of his father, that he might receive the benediction to his own advantage, under the character of another; so we shelter ourselves under the purity of Christ our elder brother, that we may obtain the testimony of righteousness in the sight of God. The words of Ambrose are; "That Isaac smelled the odour of the garments, perhaps indicates, that we are justified not by works, but by faith: since the infirmity of the flesh is an impediment to works, but the brightness of faith, which obtains the pardon of sin, conceals the error of our actions." And such is indeed the real fact; for that we may appear before the face of God to salvation, it is necessary for us to be perfumed with his fragrance, and to have all our deformities concealed and absorbed in his perfection.

(r) Rom. v. 19.

*a gentleman would rather go to hell and keep his self-respect than be justified by such a salt-
pige.*

CHAPTER XII.

A Consideration of the Divine Tribunal, necessary to a serious Conviction of Gratuitous Justification.

THOUGH it appears from the plainest testimonies that all these things are strictly true, yet we shall not clearly discover how necessary they are, till we shall have taken a view of what ought to be the foundation of all this argument. In the first place, therefore, we should reflect that we are not treating of the righteousness of a human court, but of that of the heavenly tribunal; in order that we may not apply any diminutive standard of our own, to estimate the integrity of conduct required to satisfy the Divine justice. But it is wonderful, with what temerity and presumption this is commonly decided; and it is even observable, that no men give us more confident or pompous declamations concerning the righteousness of works, than those who are notoriously guilty of open sins or addicted to secret vices. This arises from their never thinking of the righteousness of God, the smallest sense of which would prevent them from treating it with such contempt. And certainly it is exceedingly undervalued, if it be not acknowledged to be so perfect, that nothing can be acceptable to it but what is absolutely complete and immaculate, such as it never was, nor ever will be, possible to find in fallen man. It is easy for any one in the cloisters of the schools, to indulge himself in idle speculations on the merit of works to justify men; but when he comes into the presence of God, he must bid farewell to these amusements, for there the business is transacted with seriousness, and no ludicrous logomachy practised. To this point, then, must our attention be directed, if we wish to make any useful inquiry concerning true righteousness; how we can answer the celestial Judge, when he shall call us to an account. Let us place that Judge before our eyes, not according to the spontaneous imaginations of our minds, but according to the descriptions given of him in the Scripture; which represents him as one whose refulgence eclipses the stars, whose power melts the mountains, whose anger shakes the earth, whose wisdom takes

the subtle in their own craftiness, whose purity makes all things appear polluted, whose righteousness even the angels are unable to bear, who acquits not the guilty, whose vengeance, when it is once kindled, penetrates even to the abyss of hell.* Let him seat himself, I say, on the tribunal to examine the actions of men: who will present himself fearless before his throne? "Who shall dwell with the devouring fire?" saith the prophet; "Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly," &c. (s) Now let him come forward, whoever he is. But this answer causes not one to appear. For, on the contrary, we hear this fearful speech, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (t) In truth all must speedily perish, as it is written in another place, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth? They are destroyed from morning to evening." (u) Again, "Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight; how much more abominable and filthy is man, which drink iniquity like water?" (w) I confess that in the Book of Job mention is made of a righteousness, which is superior to the observance of the law. And it will be of use to remember this distinction; because, though any one could satisfy the law, he could not even then stand the scrutiny of that righteousness which exceeds all comprehension. Therefore, though Job is conscious of his own integrity, yet he is mute with astonishment, when he sees that God could not be pleased even with the sanctity of angels, if he were to enter into a strict examination of their works. I shall therefore now pass over that righteousness to which I have alluded, because it is incomprehensible, and content myself with asserting, that we must be worse than stupid, if, on an examination of our lives by the rule of the written law, we are not tormented with dreadful

* See particularly the Book of Job.

(s) Isaiah xxxiii. 14, 15.

(t) Psalm cxxx. 3.

(u) Job iv. 17—20.

(w) Job xv. 15, 16.

horror in consequence of so many maledictions, which God hath designed to arouse us, and among the rest this general one; "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them." (x) In short, this whole controversy will be uninteresting and useless, unless every one present himself as a criminal before the celestial Judge, and voluntarily prostrate and humble himself in deep solicitude concerning his absolution.

II. To this point our eyes ought to have been raised, that we might learn rather to tremble through fear, than to indulge in vain exultation. It is easy, indeed, while the comparison is made only between men, for every man to imagine himself to be possessed of something which others ought not to condemn; but when we ascend to the contemplation of God, that confidence is immediately lost. And the case of our soul with respect to God is similar to that of our body with respect to the visible heaven; for the eye, as long as it is employed in beholding adjacent objects, receives proofs of its own perspicacity: but if it be directed towards the sun, dazzled and confounded with his overpowering brightness, it feels no less debility in beholding him, than strength in the view of inferior objects. Let us not then deceive ourselves with a vain confidence, although we consider ourselves equal or superior to other men. That is nothing to God, to whose decision this cause must be submitted. But if our insolence cannot be restrained by these admonitions, he will reply to us in the language which he addressed to the Pharisees; "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God." (y) Go now, and among men proudly glory in your righteousness, while the God of heaven abominates it. But what is the language of the servants of God, who are truly taught by his Spirit? One says, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." (z) And another, though in a sense somewhat different; "How should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand." (a) Here we are plainly informed respect-

(x) Deut. xxvii. 26. (y) Luke xvi. 15. (z) Psalm cxliii. 2. (a) Job ix. 2, 3.

ing the righteousness of God, that it is such as no human works can satisfy; and such as renders it impossible for us, if accused of a thousand crimes, to exculpate ourselves from one of them. The same idea of this righteousness had very properly been entertained by that "chosen vessel" (*b*) of God, Paul, when he professed; "I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified." (*c*)

III. Nor is it only in the sacred Scriptures that such examples are found. All pious writers discover similar sentiments. Thus Augustine says; "The only hope of all the pious, who groan under this burden of corruptible flesh, and amidst the infirmities of this life, is, that we have a Mediator, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." What is the meaning of this observation? If this is their only hope, where is any confidence in works? For when he asserts this to be the only one, he precludes every other. Bernard also says; "And in fact where can be found safe and solid rest and security for the weak, but in the wounds of the Saviour? There I dwell with the greater security, in proportion to his power to save. The world rages, the body oppresses, the devil lies in wait to destroy. I do not fall, because my foundation is on a firm rock. I have committed heinous sin. My conscience is disturbed, but shall not fall into despair, because I shall recal to remembrance the wounds of the Lord." From these considerations he afterwards concludes; "My merit therefore is the compassion of the Lord; I am clearly not destitute of merit, as long as he is not destitute of compassions. But if the mercies of the Lord be a multitude of mercies, my merits are likewise equally numerous. Shall I sing of my own righteousness? O Lord, I will remember thy righteousness alone. For it is mine also, since he is made of God righteousness unto me." Again, in another place, "This is the whole merit of man; to fix all his hope on him who saves the whole man." Likewise in another place, retaining peace to himself, and ascribing the glory to God, he says; "To thee let the glory remain undiminished. It is happy for me, if I have peace. The glory I entirely renounce; lest, if I usurp what is not mine, I lose also that which is offered me."

(*b*) Acts ix. 15.

(*c*) 1 Cor. iv. 4.

In another place he is still more explicit: "Why should the Church be solicitous about merits, while it has a stronger and more secure reason for glorying in the designs of God? You need not inquire, on account of what merits we hope for blessings, especially when you read in the prophet, 'Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, but for mine holy name's sake.' (d) It suffices with respect to merit, to know that merits are not sufficient: but as it suffices for merit, not to presume on merits, so to be destitute of merits is sufficient cause of condemnation." We must excuse his custom of freely using the word *merits* for good works. But his ultimate design was to terrify hypocrites, who indulge themselves in a licentious course of sin against the grace of God; as he presently declares; "Happy is the Church which wants neither merits without presumption, nor presumption without merits. It has some ground of presumption, but not merits. It has merits, but in order to deserve, not to presume. Is not the absence of presumption itself a merit? Therefore the Church presumes the more securely, because it does not presume, having ample cause for glorying in the multitude of the Divine mercies."

IV. This is the real truth. The troubled conscience finds this to be the only asylum of safety, where it can enjoy any tranquillity, when it has to do with the Divine justice. For if the stars, which appeared most brilliant during the night, lose their splendour on the rising of the sun, what can we suppose will be the case with the most excellent innocence of man, when compared with the purity of God? For that will be an examination inconceivably severe, which shall penetrate into all the most secret thoughts of the heart, and, as Paul says, "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts;" (e) which shall constrain the reluctant conscience to confess all those things which have now passed away even from our own remembrance. We shall be urged by an accusing devil, who has been privy to all the crimes which he has impelled us to perpetrate. There the external appearance of good works, which now is the sole object of esteem, will be of no avail: sincerity of heart is all that will be required.

(d) Ezek. xxxvi. 22.

(e) 1 Cor. iv. 5.

ed. Wherefore hypocrisy, not only that by which a man conscious of his guilt before God affects ostentation before men, but that also by which every man imposes on himself before God, for we are all prone to self-complacency and adulation; hypocrisy in all its forms will then be overwhelmed with confusion, however it may now be intoxicated with presumption and pride. Persons who never look forward to such a spectacle, may indeed, delightfully and complacently, compose for themselves a temporary righteousness, of which they will immediately be stripped at the Divine judgment; just as immense riches, accumulated by us in a dream, vanish as soon as we awake. But they who inquire seriously, and as in the presence of God, respecting the true standard of righteousness, will certainly find that all the actions of men, if estimated according to their intrinsic worth, are utterly defiled and polluted; that what is commonly considered as righteousness is, in the Divine view, nothing but iniquity; that what is accounted integrity, is mere pollution; and that what is reputed glory, is real ignominy.

V. From this contemplation of the Divine perfection, let us not be unwilling to descend to take a view of ourselves, without adulation or blind self-love. For it is not to be wondered at, if we are so extremely blind in this respect, since not one of us is sufficiently cautious of that pestilent self-indulgence, which the Scripture declares to be naturally inherent in us all. "Every way of man," says Solomon, "is right in his own eyes." (*f*) Again, "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes." (*g*) But what follows from this? Is he absolved from guilt by this delusion? Not at all; but, as is immediately added, "the Lord weigheth the spirits:" that is, while men are congratulating themselves on account of the external mask of righteousness which they wear, the Lord is at the same time examining in his own balance the latent impurity of their hearts. Since we are so far from deriving any advantage therefore from such blandishments, let us not voluntarily delude ourselves to our own perdition. That we may examine ourselves properly, it is necessary for us to summon our conscience to the tribunal of God. For we have the greatest need of his light

(*f*) Prov. xxi. 2.

(*g*) Prov. xvi. 2.

in order to detect the recesses of our depravity, which otherwise are too deeply concealed. For then only shall we clearly perceive the force of this language; "How can man be justified with God; man, who is" corruption and "a worm, abominable and filthy, and who drinketh iniquity like water?" (*h*) "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." (*i*) Then also we shall experience what Job said concerning himself; "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: If I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse." (*k*) For the complaint, which the prophet formerly made respecting Israel, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way;" (*l*) is applicable not only to one period of time, but to all ages. For he there comprehends all to whom the grace of redemption was to extend: and the rigour of this examination ought to proceed till it shall have filled us with complete consternation, and thus prepared us to receive the grace of Christ. For he is deceived who supposes himself capable of this enjoyment, without having first been truly humbled. It is a well-known observation, that "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." (*m*)

VI. But what means have we of humbling ourselves, except by submitting, all poor and destitute, to the Divine mercy? For I do not call it humility, if we suppose that we have any thing left. And hitherto they have taught a pernicious hypocrisy, who have connected these two maxims, that we should entertain humble thoughts of ourselves before God, and that we should attach some dignity to our own righteousness. For if we address to God a confession which is contrary to our real sentiments, we are guilty of telling him an impudent falsehood; but we cannot think of ourselves as we ought to think, without utterly despising every thing that may be supposed an excellence in us. When we hear, therefore, from the Psalmist, that "God will save the afflicted people, but will bring down high looks;" (*n*) let us consider, first, that there is no way of salvation till we have laid aside all pride, and attained sincere humility; secondly, that this humility is not a species of

(*h*) Job xv. 16. xxv. 4, 6.(*i*) Job xiv. 4.(*k*) Job ix. 20.(*l*) Isaiah liii. 6.(*m*) 1 Peter v. 5.(*n*) Psalm xviii. 27.

modesty, consisting in conceding to God a small portion of what we might justly claim, as they are called humble among men who neither haughtily exalt themselves nor behave with insolence to others, while they nevertheless entertain some consciousness of excellence: this humility is the unfeigned submission of a mind overwhelmed with a weighty sense of its own misery and poverty: for such is the uniform description of it in the word of God. When the Lord speaks thus in Zephaniah, "I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride: I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord;" (*o*) does he not clearly shew who are truly humble? even such as are afflicted with a knowledge of their own poverty. On the contrary, he describes the proud as persons "rejoicing," because this is the usual consequence of prosperity. But to the humble, whom he intends to save, he leaves nothing but that "they trust in the name of the Lord." Thus also in Isaiah, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." (*p*) Again; "Thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." (*q*) By the contrition so frequently mentioned, we must understand a wounded heart, which prevents a man from rising when humbled in the dust. With such contrition must our heart be wounded, if we desire, according to the declaration of the Lord, to be exalted with the humble. If this be not the case, we shall be abased by the powerful hand of God to our shame and disgrace. (*r*)

VII. And, not content with mere precepts, our excellent Master, in a parable, has presented us with an example of genuine humility. For he introduces a publican, who, "standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." (*s*) We must not conclude these circumstances, his not presuming to look upwards, standing afar off, smiting upon his

(*o*) Zeph. iii. 11, 12.(*p*) Isaiah lxvi. 2.(*q*) Isaiah lvii. 15.(*r*) Matt. xxiii. 12. Luke xiv. 11. xviii. 14.(*s*) Luke xviii. 13.

breast, and confessing himself a sinner, to be marks of feigned modesty; we may be certain that they were sincere evidences of the disposition of his heart. To him our Lord opposes a Pharisee, who said, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." He openly confesses the righteousness which he has, to be the gift of God; but because he confides in his being righteous, he departs from the presence of God unacceptable and hateful to him. The publican, acknowledging his iniquity, is justified. Hence we may see how very pleasing our humiliation is in the sight of God: so that the heart is not open for the reception of his mercy unless it be divested of all idea of its own dignity. When this notion has occupied the mind, it precludes the admission of Divine mercy. That no one might have any doubt of this, Christ was sent by his Father into the world with a commission, "to preach good tidings unto the meek; to bind up the broken-hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to comfort all that mourn; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." (*t*) In pursuance of this commission, he invites to a participation of his benefits none but those who "labour and are heavy laden." (*v*) And in another place he says, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (*u*)

VIII. Therefore, if we would obey the call of Christ, let us dismiss all arrogance and carelessness from our minds. The former arises from a foolish persuasion of our own righteousness, when a man supposes himself to be possessed of any thing, the merit of which can recommend him to God; the latter may exist without any consideration of works. For multitudes of sinners, inebriated with criminal pleasures, and forgetful of the Divine judgment, are in a state as it were of lethargic insensibility, so that they never aspire after the mercy which is offered to them. But it is equally necessary for us to shake off such stupidity, and to reject all confidence in ourselves, in order that, being freed from every incumbrance, we

(*t*) Isaiah lxi. 1—3.(*v*) Matt. xi. 28.(*u*) Matt. ix. 13.

may hasten to Christ, all destitute and hungry, to be filled with his blessings. For we shall never have sufficient confidence in him, unless we entirely lose all confidence in ourselves; we shall never find sufficient encouragement in him, unless we are previously dejected in ourselves; we shall never enjoy sufficient consolation in him, unless we are utterly disconsolate in ourselves. We are prepared, therefore, to seek and obtain the grace of God, discarding at the same time all confidence in ourselves, and relying solely on the assurance of his mercy, "when," as Augustine says; "forgetting our own merits we embrace the free gifts of Christ; because if he sought merits in us, we should not come to his free gifts." With him Bernard fully agrees, when he compares proud men, that arrogate ever so little to their own merits, to unfaithful servants, because they unjustly claim the praise of the grace which passes through them; just as though a wall should say that it produces the sun-beams which it receives through a window. But not to dwell any longer on this, we may lay it down as a brief, but general and certain maxim, that he is prepared for a participation of the benefits of Divine mercy, who has wholly divested himself, I will not say of his righteousness, which is a mere nullity, but of the vain and airy phantom of righteousness; for as far as any man is satisfied with himself, so far he raises an impediment to the exercise of the grace of God.



CHAPTER XIII.

Two Things necessary to be observed in Gratuitous Justification.

HERE are two things to which we must always be particularly attentive; to maintain the glory of the Lord unimpaired and undiminished, and to preserve in our own consciences a placid composure and serene tranquillity with regard to the Divine judgment. We see how frequently and solicitously the Scripture exhorts us to render ascriptions of praise to God alone,

when it treats of justification. And indeed the apostle assures us that the design of the Lord in conferring righteousness upon us in Christ, is to manifest his own righteousness. The nature of that manifestation he immediately subjoins: it is, "that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (*w*) The righteousness of God, we see, is not sufficiently illustrious, unless he alone be esteemed righteous, and communicate the grace of justification to the unworthy. For this reason it is his will "that every mouth be stopped, and all the world become guilty before him;" (*x*) because, as long as man has any thing to allege in his own defence, it detracts something from the glory of God. Thus in Ezekiel he teaches us how greatly we glorify his name by an acknowledgment of our iniquity: "Ye shall remember your ways (saith he) and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have wrought with you for my name sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings." (*y*) If these things are contained in the true knowledge of God, that, humbled with a consciousness of our iniquity, we should consider him as indulging us with blessings of which we are unworthy, why do we attempt, to our own serious injury, to pilfer the smallest particle of the praise due to his gratuitous goodness? Thus also when Jeremiah proclaims, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in the Lord;" (*z*) does he not suggest that the glory of God sustains some diminution, if any man glory in himself? To this use these words are clearly applied by Paul, when he states, that "all the branches of our salvation are deposited with Christ, that we may not glory except in the Lord." (*a*) For he intimates, that they who suppose themselves to have even the least ground for glorying in themselves, are guilty of rebelling against God and obscuring his glory.

II. The truth then is, that we never truly glory in him, till

(*w*) Rom. iii. 26.

(*x*) Rom. iii. 19.

(*y*) Ezek. xx. 43, 44.

(*z*) Jer. ix. 23, 24.

(*a*) 1 Cor. i. 29—31.

we have entirely renounced all glory of our own. On the converse, this may be admitted as an axiom universally true, that they who glory in themselves, glory in opposition to God. For Paul is of opinion that the world is not "subject to the judgment of God," till men are deprived of all foundation for glorying. (*b*) Therefore Isaiah, when he announces, that "in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified," adds also, "and shall glory:" as though he had said, that the end of God in justifying the elect was, that they might glory in himself and in no other. But how we should glory in the Lord, he had stated in the preceding verse; "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Let us observe, that what is required is not a simple confession, but a confession confirmed by an oath; that we may not suppose any fictitious pretence of humility to be sufficient. (*c*) Here let no one plead that he does not glory at all, when without arrogance he recognises his own righteousness; for such an opinion cannot exist without generating confidence, nor confidence without being attended with glorying. Let us remember therefore, in the whole controversy concerning righteousness, that this end must be kept in view, that all the praise of it may remain perfect and undiminished with the Lord; because, according to the apostle's testimony, he hath bestowed his grace on us in order "to declare his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (*d*) Wherefore in another place, after having declared that the Lord hath conferred salvation on us in order to display "the praise of the glory of his grace;" (*e*) repeating as it were the same sentiment, he adds; "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." (*f*) And when Peter admonishes us that we are called to the hope of salvation, "that we should shew forth the praises (or virtues) of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light;" (*g*) he evidently means that the praises of God alone should resound in the ears of the faithful, so as to impose total silence on all the presumption of the flesh. The conclusion of the whole is, that man cannot with-

(*b*) Rom. iii. 19.(*e*) Ephes. i. 6.(*c*) Isaiah xlv. 23—25.(*f*) Ephes. ii. 6.(*d*) Rom. iii. 26.(*g*) 1 Peter ii. 9.

out sacrilege arrogate to himself the least particle of righteousness, because it is so much detracted and diminished from the righteousness of God.

III. Now, if we inquire by what means the conscience can obtain peace before God, we shall find no other than our reception of gratuitous righteousness from his free gift. Let us always remember the inquiry of Solomon, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" (*h*) It is certain that there is no man who is not covered with infinite pollution. Let a man of the most perfect character, then, retire into his own conscience, and enter into a scrutiny of his actions, and what will be the result? Will he feel a high degree of satisfaction, as though there were the most entire agreement between God and him; or will he not rather be lacerated with terrible agonies, on perceiving in himself such ample cause for condemnation, if he be judged according to his works? If the conscience reflect on God, it must either enjoy a solid peace with his judgment, or be surrounded with the terrors of hell. We gain nothing, therefore, in our discussions of this point, unless we establish a righteousness, the stability of which will support our souls under the scrutiny of the Divine judgment. When our souls shall possess what will enable them to appear with boldness in the presence of God, and to await and receive his judgment without any fear, then, and not before, we may be assured that we have found a righteousness which truly deserves the name. It is not without reason, therefore, that this subject is so largely insisted on by the apostle, whose words I prefer to my own: "For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise is made of none effect." (*i*) He first infers, that faith is annulled and superseded, if the promise of righteousness respect the merit of our works, or depend on our observance of the law. For no man could ever securely rely on it, since he never would be able to determine with certainty for himself that he had fulfilled the law, as in fact no man ever does completely satisfy it by any works of his own. Not to seek far for testimonies of this fact, every individual may be his own witness of it, who will enter unprejudiced

(*h*) Prov. xx. 9.

(*i*) Rom. iv. 14.

into an examination of himself. And hence it appears in what deep and dark recesses hypocrisy buries the minds of men, while they indulge themselves in such great security, and hesitate not to oppose their self-adulation to the judgment of God, as though they would stop the proceedings of his tribunal. But the faithful, who sincerely examine themselves, are troubled and distressed with a solicitude of a very different nature. The minds of men universally, therefore, ought to feel first hesitation and then despair, while considering, every one for himself, the magnitude of the debt with which they are still oppressed, and their immense distance from the conditions prescribed to them. Behold their confidence already broken and extinguished: for to confide is not to fluctuate, to vary, to be hurried hither and thither, to hesitate, to be kept in suspense, to stagger, and finally to despair; but it is, to strengthen the mind with content, certainty, and solid security, and to have somewhat upon which to stand and to rest.

IV. He adds likewise another consideration, that the promise would be void and of none effect. For if the fulfilment of it depend on our merit, when shall we have made such a progress as to deserve the favour of God? Besides, this second argument is a consequence of the former, since the promise will be fulfilled to those alone who shall exercise faith in it. Therefore if faith be wanting, the promise will retain no force. "Therefore the inheritance is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." (4) For it is abundantly confirmed, when it depends solely on the Divine mercy; because mercy and truth are connected by an indissoluble bond, and whatever God mercifully promises, he also faithfully performs. Thus David, before he implores salvation for himself according to the word of God, first represents it as originating in his mercy: "According to thy word unto thy servant, let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live." (5) And for this there is sufficient reason, since God has no other inducement to promise than what arises from his mere mercy. Here then we must place, and as it were deeply fix, all our hopes, without regarding our own works or seeking any

(4) Rom. iv. 16.

(5) Psalm cxix. 76, 77.

assistance from them. Nor must it be supposed that we are advancing a new doctrine, for the same conduct is recommended by Augustine. "Christ," says he, "will reign in his servants for ever. God hath promised this, God hath said it; if that be insufficient, God hath sworn it. Since the promise, therefore, is established, not according to our merits, but according to his mercy, no man ought to speak with anxiety of that which he cannot doubt." Bernard also says; "The disciples of Christ asked, Who can be saved? He replied, With men this is impossible, but not with God. This is all our confidence, this our only consolation, this the whole foundation of our hope. But certain of the possibility, what think we of his will? Who knows whether he deserve love or hatred? (m) Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? (n) Here now we evidently need faith to help us, and his truth to assist us; that what is concealed from us in the heart of the Father, may be revealed by the Spirit, and that the testimony of the Spirit may persuade our hearts that we are sons of God; that he may persuade us by calling and justifying us freely by faith; in which there is, as it were, an intermediate passage from eternal predestination to future glory." Let us draw the following brief conclusion; The Scripture declares that the promises of God have no efficacy, unless they be embraced by the conscience with a steady confidence: and whenever there is any doubt or uncertainty, it pronounces them to be made void. Again, it asserts that they have no stability if they depend on our works. Either, therefore, we must be for ever destitute of righteousness, or our works must not come into consideration, but the ground must be occupied by faith alone, whose nature it is to open the ears and shut the eyes; that is, to be intent only on the promise, and to avert the thoughts from all human dignity or merit. Thus is accomplished that remarkable prophecy of Zechariah; "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree:" (o) in which the prophet suggests that the faithful enjoy no true peace till after they have obtained

(m) Eccles. ix. 1.

(n) 1 Cor. ii. 16.

(o) Zech. iii. 9, 10.

the remission of their sins. For this analogy must be observed in the prophets, that when they treat of the kingdom of Christ, they exhibit the external bounties of God as figures of spiritual blessings. Wherefore also Christ is denominated "the Prince of peace," and "our Peace:" (*p*) because he calms all the agitations of the conscience. If we inquire, by what means; we must come to the sacrifice by which God is appeased. For no man will ever lose his fears who shall not be assured that God is propitiated solely by that atonement which Christ has made by sustaining his wrath. In short, we must seek for peace only in the terrors of Christ our Redeemer.

V. But why do I use such an obscure testimony? Paul invariably denies that peace or tranquillity can be enjoyed in the conscience, without a certainty that we are justified by faith. (*q*) And he also declares whence that certainty proceeds; it is "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost;" (*r*) as though he had said that our consciences can never be satisfied without a certain persuasion of our acceptance with God. Hence he exclaims in the name of all the faithful, "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ?" (*s*) For till we have reached that port of safety, we shall tremble with alarm at every slightest breeze; but while God shall manifest himself as our Shepherd, we shall fear no evil even in the valley of the shadow of death. (*t*) Whoever they are, therefore, who pretend that we are justified by faith, because, being regenerated, we are righteous by living a spiritual life, they have never tasted the sweetness of grace, so as to have confidence that God would be propitious to them. Whence also it follows, that they know no more of the method of praying aright, than the Turks or any other profane nations. For according to the testimony of Paul, faith is not genuine unless it dictate and suggest that most delightful name of Father, and unless it open our mouth freely to cry, "Abba, Father;" (*v*) which he in another place expresses still more clearly; "In Christ we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." (*u*) This certainly arises not from the

(*p*) Isaiah ix. 6. Ephes. ii. 14.

(*r*) Rom. v. 5.

(*v*) Gal. iv. 6.

(*s*) Rom. viii. 38, &c.

(*u*) Ephes. iii. 12.

(*q*) Rom. v. 1.

(*t*) Psalm xxiii. 4.

gift of regeneration; which, being always imperfect in the present state, contains in itself abundant occasion of doubting. Wherefore it is necessary to come to this remedy; that the faithful should conclude that they cannot hope for an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven on any other foundation, but because being ingrafted into the body of Christ, they are gratuitously accounted righteous. For with respect to justification, faith is a thing merely passive, bringing nothing of our own to conciliate the favour of God, but receiving what we need from Christ.



CHAPTER XIV.

The Commencement and continual Progress of Justification.

FOR the further elucidation of this subject, let us examine what kind of righteousness can be found in men during the whole course of their lives. Let us divide them into four classes. For either they are destitute of the knowledge of God, and immersed in idolatry; or, having been initiated by the sacraments, they lead impure lives, denying God in their actions, while they confess him with their lips, and belong to Christ only in name; or they are hypocrites, concealing the iniquity of their hearts with vain disguises; or, being regenerated by the Spirit of God, they devote themselves to true holiness. In the first of these classes, judged of according to their natural characters, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there will not be found a single spark of goodness; unless we mean to charge the Scripture with falsehood in these representations which it gives of all the sons of Adam: that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked:” (w) that “every imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth:” (x) “that the thoughts of man are vanity; that there is no fear of God before his eyes:” (y) that “there is none that understand-

(w) Jer. xvii. 9. (x) Gen. vi. 5. viii. 21. (y) Psalm xlii. 11. xxxvi. 1.

eth, none that seeketh after God:" (z) in a word, "that he is flesh;" (a) a term expressive of all those works which are enumerated by Paul; "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders," (b) and every impurity and abomination that can be conceived. This is the dignity, in the confidence of which they must glory. But if any among them discover that integrity in their conduct which among men has some appearance of sanctity, yet since we know that God regards not external splendour, we must penetrate to the secret springs of these actions, if we wish them to avail any thing to justification. We must narrowly examine, I say, from what disposition of heart these works proceed. Though a most extensive field of observation is now before us, yet, since the subject may be dispatched in very few words, I shall be as compendious as possible.

II. In the first place, I do not deny, that whatever excellencies appear in unbelievers, they are the gifts of God. I am not so at variance with the common opinion of mankind, as to contend that there is no difference between the justice, moderation, and equity of Titus or Trajan, and the rage, intemperance, and cruelty, of Caligula, or Nero, or Domitian; between the obscenities of Tiberius and the continence of Vespasian; and, not to dwell on particular virtues or vices, between the observance and the contempt of moral obligation and positive laws. For so great is the difference between just and unjust, that it is visible even in the lifeless image of it. For what order will be left in the world, if these opposites be confounded together? Such a distinction as this, therefore, between virtuous and vicious actions, has not only been engraven by the Lord in the heart of every man, but has also been frequently confirmed by his providential dispensations. We see how he confers many blessings of the present life on those who practise virtue among men. Not that this external resemblance of virtue merits the least favour from him; but he is pleased to discover his great esteem of true righteousness, by not permitting that which is external and hypocritical to remain without a temporal reward.

(z) Psalm xiv. 1—3. Rom. iii. 11.

(a) Gen. vi. 3.

(b) Gal. v. 19, &c.

Whence it follows, as we have just acknowledged, that these virtues, whatever they may be, or rather images of virtues, are the gifts of God; since there is nothing in any respect laudable which does not proceed from him.

III. Nevertheless, the observation of Augustine is strictly true, That all who are strangers to the religion of the one true God, however they may be esteemed worthy of admiration for their reputed virtue, not only merit no reward, but are rather deserving of punishment, because they contaminate the pure gifts of God with the pollution of their own hearts. For though they are instruments used by God for the preservation of human society, by the exercise of justice, continence, friendship, temperance, fortitude, and prudence; yet they perform these good works of God very improperly; being restrained from the commission of evil, not by a sincere attachment to true virtue, but either by mere ambition, or by self-love, or by some other irregular disposition. These actions, therefore, being corrupted in their very source by the impurity of their hearts, are no more entitled to be classed among virtues, than those vices which commonly deceive mankind by their affinity and similitude to virtues. Besides, when we remember that the end of what is right is always to serve God, whatever is directed to any other end, can have no claim to that appellation. Therefore, since they regard not the end prescribed by Divine wisdom, though an act performed by them be externally and apparently good, yet being directed to a wrong end, it becomes sin. He concludes, therefore, that all the Fabricii, Scipios, and Catos, in all their celebrated actions, were guilty of sin, inasmuch as, being destitute of the light of faith, they did not direct those actions to that end to which they ought to have directed them; that consequently they had no genuine righteousness; because moral duties are estimated not by external actions, but by the ends for which such actions are designed.

IV. Besides, if there be any truth in the assertion of John, that "he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life;" (c) they who have no interest in Christ, whatever be their characters, their actions, or their endeavours, are constantly advancing,

through the whole course of their lives, towards destruction and the sentence of eternal death. On this argument is founded the following observation of Augustine: "Our religion discriminates between the righteous and the unrighteous, not by the law of works but by that of faith, without which works apparently good are perverted into sins." Wherefore the same writer, in another place, strikingly compares the exertions of such men to a deviation in a race from the prescribed course. For the more vigorously any one runs out of the way, he recedes so much the further from the goal, and becomes so much the more unfortunate. Wherefore he contends, that it is better to halt in the way, than to run out of the way. Finally, it is evident that they are evil trees, since without a participation of Christ there is no sanctification. They may produce fruits fair and beautiful to the eye, and even sweet to the taste, but never any that are good. Hence we clearly perceive that all the thoughts, meditations, and actions of man, antecedent to a reconciliation to God by faith, are accursed, and not only of no avail to justification, but certainly deserving of condemnation. And why do we dispute concerning it as a dubious point, when it is already proved by the testimony of the apostle, that "without faith it is impossible to please God." (*d*)

V. But the proof will be still clearer, if the grace of God be directly opposed to the natural condition of man. The Scripture invariably proclaims, that God finds nothing in men which can incite him to bless them, but that he prevents them by his gratuitous goodness. For what can a dead man do to recover life? But when God illuminates us with the knowledge of himself, he is said to raise us from death and to make us new creatures. (*e*) For under this character we find the Divine goodness towards us frequently celebrated, especially by the apostle. "God," says he, "who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ," &c. (*f*) In another place, when under the type of Abraham he treats of the general calling of the faithful, he says, It is "God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they

(*d*) Heb. xi. 6.(*e*) John v. 25.(*f*) Eph. ii. 4, 5.

were.” (g) If we are nothing, what can we do? Wherefore God forcibly represses this presumption, in the book of Job, in the following words, “Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.” (h) Paul, explaining this passage, concludes from it, that we ought not to suppose we bring any thing to the Lord but ignominious indigence and emptiness. (i) Wherefore, in the passage cited above, in order to prove that we attain to the hope of salvation, not by works, but solely by the grace of God, he alleges, that “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (k) As though he would say, Who of us can boast that he has influenced God by his righteousness, since our first power to do well proceeds from regeneration? For, according to the constitution of our nature, oil might be extracted from a stone sooner than we could perform a good work. It is wonderful, indeed, that man, condemned to such ignominy, dares to pretend to have any thing left. Let us confess therefore, with that eminent servant of the Lord, that “God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace;” (l) and that “the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared,” because “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs of eternal life.” (m) By this confession we divest man of all righteousness, even to the smallest particle, till through mere mercy he has been regenerated to the hope of eternal life; for if a righteousness of works contributed any thing to our justification, we are not truly said to be “justified by grace.” The apostle, when he asserted justification to be by grace, had certainly not forgotten his argument in another place, that “if it be of works, then it is no more grace.” (n) And what else does our Lord intend, when he declares “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners?” (o) If sinners only are admitted, why do we seek to enter by a counterfeit righteousness?

VI. The same thought frequently recurs to me, that I am

(g) Rom. iv. 17. (h) Job xli. 11. (i) Rom. xi. 35. (k) Ephes. ii. 10.
 (l) 2 Tim. i. 9. (m) Titus iii. 4, 5, 7. (n) Rom. xi. 6. (o) Matt. ix. 13.

in danger of injuring the mercy of God, by labouring with so much anxiety in the defence of this doctrine, as though it were doubtful or obscure. But such being our malignity, that, unless it be most powerfully subdued, it never allows to God that which belongs to him, I am constrained to dwell a little longer upon it. But as the Scripture is sufficiently perspicuous on this subject, I shall use its language in preference to my own. Isaiah, after having described the universal ruin of mankind, properly subjoins the method of recovery. "The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment. And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his own arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him." (*p*) Where are our righteousnesses, if it be true, as the prophet says, that no one assists the Lord in procuring his salvation? So another prophet introduces the Lord speaking of the reconciliation of sinners to himself, saying, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever, in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy." (*q*) If this covenant, which is evidently our first union with God, depend on his mercy, there remains no foundation for our righteousness. And I should really wish to be informed by those, who pretend that man advances to meet God with some righteousness of works, whether there be any righteousness at all, but that which is accepted by God. If it be madness to entertain such a thought, what that is acceptable to God can proceed from his enemies who, with all their actions, are the objects of his complete abhorrence? And that we are all the inveterate and avowed enemies of our God, till we are justified and received into his friendship, is an undeniable truth. (*r*) If justification be the principle from which love originates, what righteousnesses of works can precede it? To destroy that pestilent arrogance, therefore, John carefully apprises us that "we did not first love him." (*s*) And the Lord had by his prophet long before taught the same truth; "I will love them freely," saith he, "for mine anger is turned away." (*t*) If his love was spontaneously inclined towards us, it certainly is not

(*p*) Isaiah lix. 15, 16.(*q*) Hosea ii. 19, 23.(*r*) Rom. v. 6, 10. Col. i. 21.(*s*) 1 John iv. 10.(*t*) Hosea xiv. 4.

excited by works. But the ignorant mass of mankind have only this notion of it; that no man has merited that Christ should effect our redemption; but that towards obtaining the possession of redemption, we derive some assistance from our own works. But however we may have been redeemed by Christ, yet till we are introduced into communion with him by the calling of the Father, we are both heirs of darkness and death, and enemies to God. For Paul teaches, that we are not purified and washed from our pollutions by the blood of Christ, till the Spirit effects that purification within us. (u) This is the same that Peter intends, when he declares that the "sanctification of the Spirit" is effectual "unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (x) If we are sprinkled by the Spirit with the blood of Christ for purification, we must not imagine that before this ablution we are in any other state than that of sinners destitute of Christ. We may be certain, therefore, that the commencement of our salvation is as it were a resurrection from death to life; because, when "on the behalf of Christ it is given to us to believe on him," (y) we then begin to experience a transition from death to life.

VII. The same reasoning may be applied to the second and third classes of men in the division stated above. For the impurity of the conscience proves, that they are neither of them yet regenerated by the Spirit of God; and their unregeneracy betrays also their want of faith: whence it appears, that they are not yet reconciled to God, or justified in his sight, since these blessings are only attained by faith. What can be performed by sinners alienated from God, that is not execrable in his view? Yet all the impious, and especially hypocrites, are inflated with this foolish confidence. Though they know that their heart is full of impurity, yet if they perform any specious actions, they esteem them too good to be despised by God. Hence that pernicious error, that though convicted of a polluted and impious heart, they cannot be brought to confess themselves destitute of righteousness; but while they acknowledge themselves to be unrighteous, because it cannot be denied, they still arrogate to themselves some degree of righteousness. This vanity the Lord excellently refutes by the prophet; "Ask now," saith

(u) 1 Cor. vi. 11.

(x) 1 Peter i. 2.

(y) Phil. i. 29.

he, "the priests, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean." (z) I wish that this passage might either obtain full credit with us, or be deeply impressed on our memory. For there is no one, however flagitious his whole life may be, who can suffer himself to be persuaded of what the Lord here plainly declares. The greatest sinner, as soon as he has performed two or three duties of the law, doubts not but they are accepted of him for righteousness; but the Lord positively denies that any sanctification is acquired by such actions, unless the heart be previously well purified: and not content with this, he asserts that all the works of sinners are contaminated by the impurity of their hearts. Let the name of righteousness then no longer be given to these works which are condemned for their pollution by the lips of God. And by what a fine similitude does he demonstrate this! For it might have been objected that what the Lord had enjoined was inviolably holy. But he shews, on the contrary, that it is not to be wondered at, if those things which are santified by the law of the Lord, are defiled by the pollution of the wicked; since an unclean hand cannot touch any thing that has been consecrated, without profaning it.

VIII. He excellently pursues the same argument also in Isaiah: "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; your new moons, and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings." (a) What is the reason that the Lord is so displeased at an obedience to his law? But, in fact, he here rejects nothing that arises from the genuine observance

(z) Hag. ii. 11—14.

(a) Isaiah i. 13—16.

of the law; the beginning of which he every where teaches is an unfeigned fear of his name. (b) If that be wanting, all the oblations made to him are not merely trifles, but nauseous and abominable pollutions. Let hypocrites go now, and, retaining depravity concealed in their hearts, endeavour by their works to merit the favour of God. But by such means they will add provocation to provocation: for "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright" alone "is his delight." (c) We lay it down therefore as an undoubted truth, which ought to be well known to such as are but moderately versed in the Scriptures, that even the most splendid works of men not yet truly sanctified, are so far from righteousness in the Divine view, that they are accounted sins. And therefore they have strictly adhered to the truth, who have maintained that the works of a man do not conciliate God's favour to his person; but on the contrary, that works are never acceptable to God, unless the person who performs them has previously found favour in his sight. And this order, to which the Scripture directs us, is religiously to be observed. Moses relates, that "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." (d) Does he not plainly indicate that the Lord is propitious to men, before he regards their works? Wherefore the purification of the heart is a necessary pre-requisite, in order that the works which we perform, may be favourably received by God; for the declaration of Jeremiah is always in force, that the "eyes of the Lord are upon the truth." (e) And the Holy Spirit hath asserted by the mouth of Peter, that it is "by faith" alone that the "heart" is "purified," (f) which proves that the first foundation is laid in a true and living faith.

IX. Let us now examine what degree of righteousness is possessed by those whom we have ranked in the fourth class. We admit, that when God, by the interposition of the righteousness of Christ, reconciles us to himself, and having granted us the free remission of our sins, esteems us as righteous persons, to this mercy he adds also another blessing; for he dwells in us by his Holy Spirit, by whose power our carnal desires are

(b) Deut. iv. 6. Psalm cxi. 10. Prov. i. 7. ix. 10.

(c) Prov. xv. 8.

(d) Gen. iv. 4.

(e) Jer. v. 3.

(f) Acts xv. 9.

daily more and more mortified, and we are sanctified, that is, consecrated to the Lord by real purity of life, having our hearts moulded to obey his law, so that it is our prevailing inclination, to submit to his will, and to promote his glory alone by all possible means. But even while, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are walking in the ways of the Lord; that we may not forget ourselves, and be filled with pride, we feel such remains of imperfection, as afford us abundant cause for humility. The Scripture declares, that "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." (*g*) What kind of righteousness then will even the faithful obtain from their own works? In the first place, I assert, that the best of their performances are tarnished and corrupted by some carnal impurity, and debased by a mixture of some alloy. Let any holy servant of God select from his whole life that which he shall conceive to have been the best of all his actions, and let him examine it with attention on every side; he will undoubtedly discover in it some taint of the corruption of the flesh: since our alacrity to good actions is never what it ought to be, but our course is retarded by great debility. Though we perceive that the blemishes which deform the works of the saints, are not difficult to be discovered, yet suppose we admit them to be very diminutive spots, will they not be at all offensive in the sight of God, in which even the stars are not pure? We have now ascertained, that there is not a single action performed by the saints, which, if judged according to its intrinsic merit, does not justly deserve to be rewarded with shame.

X. In the next place, even though it were possible for us to perform any works completely pure and perfect, yet one sin is sufficient to extinguish and annihilate all remembrance of antecedent righteousness, as is declared by the prophet. (*h*) With him James also agrees; "Whosoever shall offend," says he, "in one point, he is guilty of all." (*i*) Now since this mortal life is never pure or free from sin, whatever righteousness we might acquire, being perpetually corrupted, overpowered, and destroyed by subsequent sins, it would neither be admitted in the sight of God, nor be imputed to us for righteousness. Lastly, in considering the righteousness of works, we should

(*g*) Eccles. vii. 20.(*h*) Ezek. xviii. 24.(*i*) James ii. 10.

regard, not any action commanded in the law, but the commandment itself. Therefore, if we seek righteousness by the law, it is in vain for us to perform two or three works; a perpetual observance of the law is indispensably necessary. Wherefore God does not impute to us for righteousness that remission of sins, of which we have spoken, once only (as some foolishly imagine) in order that having obtained pardon for our past lives, we may afterwards seek righteousness by the law; which would be only sporting with us and deluding us by a fallacious hope. For since perfection is unattainable by us, as long as we are in this mortal body, and the law denounces death and judgment on all whose works are not completely and universally righteous, it will always have matter of accusation and condemnation against us, unless it be prevented by the Divine mercy continually absolving us by a perpetual remission of our sins. Wherefore it will ever be true, as we asserted at the beginning, that if we be judged according to our demerits, whatever be our designs or undertakings, we are nevertheless, with all our endeavours and all our pursuits, deserving of death and destruction.

XI. We must strenuously insist on these two points; first, that there never was an action performed by a pious man, which, if examined by the scrutinizing eye of Divine justice, would not deserve condemnation; and secondly, if any such thing be admitted (though it cannot be the case with any individual of mankind) yet being corrupted and contaminated by the sins, of which its performer is confessedly guilty, it loses every claim to the Divine favour. And this is the principal hinge on which our controversy with the Papists turns. For concerning the beginning of justification there is no dispute between us and the sounder schoolmen, but we all agree, that a sinner being freely delivered from condemnation obtains righteousness, and that by the remission of his sins: only they, under the term *justification*, comprehend that renovation in which we are renewed by the Spirit of God to an obedience to the law, and so they describe the righteousness of a regenerate man as consisting in this; that a man after having been once reconciled to God through faith in Christ, is accounted righteous with God on account of his good works, the merit of which is the cause of his acceptance. But the Lord, on the

contrary, declares, "that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness," (*k*) not during the time while he yet remained a worshipper of idols, but after he had been eminent during many years for the sanctity of his life. Abraham then had for a long time worshipped God from a pure heart, and performed all that obedience to the law, which a mortal man is capable of performing; yet after all, his righteousness consisted in faith. Whence we conclude, according to the argument of Paul, that it was not of works. So when the prophet says, "the just shall live by his faith;" (*l*) he is not speaking of the impious and profane, whom the Lord justifies by converting them to the faith; but his address is directed to the faithful, and they are promised a life of faith. Paul also removes every doubt, when in confirmation of this sentiment, he adduces the following passage of David; "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven." (*m*) But it is certain that David spake not of impious men, but of the faithful, whose characters resembled his own; for he spoke from the experience of his own conscience. Wherefore it is necessary for us, not to have this blessing for once only, but to retain it as long as we live. Lastly, he asserts, that the message of a free reconciliation with God, is not only promulgated for a day or two, but is perpetual in the church. (*n*) The faithful therefore, even to the end of their lives, have no other righteousness than that which is there described. For the mediatorial office is perpetually sustained by Christ, by whom the Father is reconciled to us; and the efficacy of whose death is perpetually the same, consisting in ablution, satisfaction, expiation, and perfect obedience, which covers all our iniquities. And Paul does not tell the Ephesians that they are indebted to grace merely for the beginning of their salvation, but that they "are saved by grace, not of works, lest any man should boast." (*o*)

XII. The subterfuges, by which the schoolmen endeavour to evade these arguments, are unavailing. They say, that the sufficiency of good works to justification arises not from their intrinsic merit, but from the grace through which they are accepted. Secondly, because they are constrained to acknow-

(*k*) Rom. iv. 9.(*l*) Hab. ii. 4.(*m*) Rom. iv. 7.(*n*) 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.(*o*) Ephes. ii. 8, 9.

ledge the righteousness of works to be always imperfect in the present state, they admit, that as long as we live we need the remission of our sins, in order to supply the defects of our works; but that our deficiencies are compensated by works of supererogation. I reply, that what they denominate the grace through which our works are accepted, is no other than the free goodness of the Father, with which he embraces us in Christ, when he invests us with the righteousness of Christ, and accepts it as ours, in order that, in consequence of it, he may treat us as holy, pure, and righteous persons. For the righteousness of Christ (which being the only perfect righteousness, is the only one that can bear the Divine scrutiny) must be produced on our behalf, and judicially presented, as in the case of a surety. Being furnished with this, we obtain by faith the perpetual remission of our sins. Our imperfections and impurities, being concealed by its purity, are not imputed to us, but are as it were buried, and prevented from appearing in the view of Divine justice, till the advent of that hour, when the old man being slain and utterly annihilated in us, the Divine goodness shall receive us into a blessed peace with the new Adam, in that state to wait for the day of the Lord, when we shall receive incorruptible bodies, and be translated to the glories of the celestial kingdom.

XIII. If these things are true, surely no works of ours can render us acceptable to God; nor can the actions themselves be pleasing to him, any otherwise than as a man, who is covered with the righteousness of Christ, pleases God and obtains the remission of his sins. For God hath not promised eternal life as a reward of certain works; he only declares, that "he that doeth these things shall live," (*p*) denouncing, on the contrary, that memorable curse against all who continue not in the observance of every one of his commands. (*q*) This abundantly refutes the erroneous notion of a partial righteousness, since no other righteousness is admitted into heaven but an entire observance of the law. Nor is there any more solidity in their pretence of a sufficient compensation for imperfections by works of supererogation. For are they not by this perpetually recurring to the

(*p*) *Ley.* xviii. 5. *Rom.* x. 5.

(*q*) *Deut.* xxvii. 26. *Gal.* iii. 10.

subterfuge, from which they have already been driven, that the partial observance of the law constitutes, as far as it goes, a righteousness of works? They unblushingly assume as granted, what no man of sound judgment will concede. The Lord frequently declares, that he acknowledges no righteousness of works, except in a perfect obedience to his law. What presumption is it for us, who are destitute of this, in order that we may not appear to be despoiled of all our glory, or in other words, to submit entirely to the Lord; what presumption is it for us to boast of I know not what fragments of a few actions, and to endeavour to supply deficiencies by other satisfactions? *Satisfactions* have already been so completely demolished, that they ought not to occupy even a transient thought. I only remark, that those who trifle in this manner, do not consider what an execrable sin it is in the sight of God; for indeed they ought to know, that all the righteousness of all mankind, accumulated in one mass, is insufficient to compensate for a single sin. We see that man on account of one offence was rejected and abandoned by God, so that he lost all means of regaining salvation. (r) They are deprived therefore of the power of satisfaction, with which, however they flatter themselves, they will certainly never be able to render a satisfaction to God, to whom nothing will be pleasing or acceptable that proceeds from his enemies. Now his enemies are all those, to whom he determines to impute sin. Our sins therefore must be covered and forgiven, before the Lord can regard any of our works. Whence it follows that the remission of sins is absolutely gratuitous, and that it is wickedly blasphemed by those who obtrude any *satisfactions*. Let us therefore, after the example of the apostle, “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling.” (s)

XIV. But how is the pretence of works of supererogation consistent with this injunction; “When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do?” (t) This direction does not inculcate an act of simulation or false-

(r) Gen. iii.

(s) Phil. iii. 13, 14.

(t) Luke xvii. 10.

hood, but a decision in our mind respecting that of which we are certain. The Lord therefore commands us sincerely to think and consider with ourselves, that our services to him are none of them gratuitous, but merely the performance of indispensable duties: and that justly; for we are under such numerous obligations as we could never discharge, even though all our thoughts and all our members were devoted to the duties of the law. In saying therefore, "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded," he supposes a case of one man having attained to a degree of righteousness beyond what is attained by all the men in the world. How then, while every one of us is at the greatest distance from this point, can we presume to glory that we have made a large addition to that perfect standard? Nor can any one reasonably object, that there is nothing to prevent his efforts from going beyond his necessary obligations, who in any respect fails of doing the duty incumbent on him. For we must acknowledge, that we cannot imagine any thing pertaining either to the service of God or to the love of our neighbour, which is not comprehended in the Divine law. But if it is a part of the law, let us not boast of voluntary liberality, where we are bound by necessity.

XV. It is irrevelant to this subject, to allege the boasting of Paul, (*u*) that among the Corinthians he voluntarily receded from what, if he had chosen, he might have claimed as his right, and not only did what was incumbent on him to do, but afforded them his gratuitous services beyond the requisitions of duty. They ought to attend to the reason there assigned, that he acted thus, "lest he should hinder the Gospel of Christ." (*w*) For wicked and fraudulent teachers recommended themselves by this stratagem of liberality, by which they endeavoured, both to conciliate a favourable reception to their own pernicious dogmas, and to fix an odium on the Gospel; so that Paul was necessitated either to endanger the doctrine of Christ, or to oppose these artifices. Now, if it be a matter of indifference to a Christian to incur an offence when he may avoid it, I confess that the apostle performed for the Lord a work of supererogation: but if this was justly required of a prudent minister of the Gospel, I maintain that he did what was his

(*u*) 1 Cor. ix.(*w*) 1 Cor. ix. 12.

duty to do. Even if no such reason appeared, yet the observation of Chrysostom is always true, That all that we have is on the same tenure as the possessions of slaves, which the law pronounces to be the property of their masters. And Christ has clearly delivered the same truth in the parable, where he inquires whether we thank a servant, when he returns home in the evening, after the various labours of the day. (x) But it is possible that he may have laboured with greater diligence than we had ventured to require. This may be granted; yet he has done no more than, by the condition of servitude, he was under an obligation to do; since he belongs to us, with all the ability he has. I say nothing of the nature of the supererogations which these men wish to boast of before God; for they are contemptible trifles, which he has never commanded, which he does not approve, nor, when they render up their account to him, will he accept them. We cannot admit that there are any works of supererogation, except such as those of which it is said by the prophet, "Who hath required this at your hand?" (y) But let them remember the language of another passage respecting these things; "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" (z) It is easy indeed for these idle doctors to dispute concerning these things in easy chairs; but when the Judge of all shall ascend the judgment-seat, all such empty notions must vanish away. The object of our inquiries ought to be, what plea we may bring forward with confidence at his tribunal, not what we can invent in schools and cloisters.

XVI. On this subject our minds require to be guarded chiefly against two pernicious principles; That we place no confidence in the righteousness of our works, and that we ascribe no glory to them. The Scriptures every where drive us from all confidence, when they declare that all our righteousnesses are odious in the Divine view, unless they are perfumed with the holiness of Christ; and that they can only excite the vengeance of God, unless they are supported by his merciful pardon. Thus they leave us nothing to do, but to deprecate the wrath of our Judge with the confession of David; "Enter not

(x) Luke xvii. 9.

(y) Isaiah i. 12.

(z) Isaiah lv. 2.

into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." (a) And where Job says, "If I be wicked, woe unto me; and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head;" (b) though he refers to that consummate righteousness of God, compared to which even the angels are deficient; yet he at the same time shews, that when God comes to judgment all men must be dumb. For he not only means that he would rather freely recede, than incur the danger of contending with the rigour of God, but signifies that he experiences in himself no other righteousness than what would instantaneously vanish before the Divine presence. When confidence is destroyed, all boasting must of necessity be relinquished. For who can give the praise of righteousness to his works, in which he is afraid to confide in the presence of God? We must therefore have recourse to the Lord, in whom we are assured, by Isaiah, that "all the seed of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory;" (c) for it is strictly true, as he says in another place, that we are "the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." (d) Our minds therefore will then be properly purified, when they shall neither confide nor glory in our works. But foolish men are led into such a false and delusive confidence, by the error of always considering their works as the cause of their salvation.

XVII. But if we advert to the four kinds of causes, which the philosophers direct us to consider in the production of effects, we shall find none of them consistent with works in the accomplishment of our salvation. For the Scripture every where proclaims, that the efficient cause of eternal life being procured for us, was the mercy of our heavenly Father, and his gratuitous love towards us; that the material cause is Christ and his obedience, by which he obtained a righteousness for us; and what shall we denominate the formal and instrumental cause, unless it be faith? These three John comprehends in one sentence, when he says, that "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (e) The final cause the apostle declares to be, both the demonstration of the

(a) Psalm cxliii. 2.

(b) Job x. 15.

(c) Isaiah xlv. 25.

(d) Isaiah lxi. 3.

(e) John iii. 16.

Divine righteousness and the praise of the Divine goodness, in a passage in which he also expressly mentions the other three causes. For this is his language to the Romans; "All have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God; being justified freely by his grace:" (*f*) here we have the original source of our salvation, which is the gratuitous mercy of God towards us. It follows, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:" here we have the matter of our justification. "Through faith in his blood:" here he points out the instrumental cause, by which the righteousness of Christ is revealed to us. Lastly, he subjoins the end of all, when he says, "To declare his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." And to suggest by the way, that this righteousness consists in reconciliation or propitiation, he expressly asserts that Christ was "set forth to be a propitiation." So also in the first chapter to the Ephesians, he teaches that we are received into the favour of God through his mere mercy; that it is accomplished by the mediation of Christ; that it is apprehended by faith; and that the end of all is, that the glory of the Divine goodness may be fully displayed. (*g*) When we see that every part of our salvation is accomplished without us, what reason have we to confide or to glory in our works? Nor can even the most inveterate enemies of Divine grace raise any controversy with us concerning the efficient or the final cause, unless they mean altogether to renounce the authority of the Scripture. Over the material and formal causes they superinduce a false colouring; as if our own works were to share the honour of them with faith and the righteousness of Christ. But this also is contradicted by the Scripture, which affirms that Christ is the sole author of our righteousness and life, and that this blessing of righteousness is enjoyed by faith alone.

XVIII. The saints often confirm and console themselves with the remembrance of their own innocence and integrity, and sometimes even refrain not from proclaiming it. Now this is done for two reasons: either that, in comparing their good cause with the bad cause of the impious, they may derive from

(*f*) Rom. iii. 23, &c.

(*g*) Ephes. i. 5—7, 13.

such comparison an assurance of victory, not so much for the commendation of their own righteousness, as for the just and merited condemnation of their adversaries; or that, even without any comparison with others, while they examine themselves before God, the purity of their consciences may afford them some consolation and confidence. To the former of these reasons we shall advert hereafter; let us now briefly examine the consistency of the latter with what we have before asserted, that in the sight of God we ought to place no reliance on the merit of works, nor glory on account of them. The consistency appears in this; that for the foundation and accomplishment of their salvation, the saints look to the Divine goodness alone, without any regard to works. And they not only apply themselves to it above all things, as the commencement of their happiness, but likewise depend upon it as the consummation of their felicity. A conscience thus founded, built up, and established, is also confirmed by the consideration of works; that is, as far as they are evidences of God dwelling and reigning in us. Now this confidence of works being found in none but those who have previously cast all the confidence of their souls on the mercy of God, it ought not to be thought contrary to that upon which it depends. Wherefore when we exclude the confidence of works, we only mean that the mind of a Christian should not be directed to any merit of works as a mean of salvation; but should altogether rely on the gratuitous promise of righteousness. We do not forbid him to support and confirm this faith by marks of the Divine benevolence to him. For if when we call to remembrance the various gifts which God hath conferred on us, they are all as so many rays from the Divine countenance, by which we are illuminated to contemplate the full blaze of supreme goodness, much more will the grace of good works, which demonstrate that we have received the Spirit of adoption.

XIX. When the saints, therefore, confirm their faith, or derive matter of rejoicing from the integrity of their consciences, they only conclude, from the fruits of vocation, that they have been adopted by the Lord as his children. The declaration of Solomon, that "In the fear of the Lord is strong confi-

dence;" (*h*) and the protestation sometimes used by the saints to obtain a favourable audience from the Lord, that "they have walked before" him "in truth and with a perfect heart;" (*i*) these things have no concern in laying the foundation for establishing the conscience; nor are they of any value, except as they are consequences of the Divine vocation. For there nowhere exists that fear of God which can establish a full assurance, and the saints are conscious that their integrity is yet accompanied with many reliques of corruption. But as the fruits of regeneration evince that the Holy Spirit dwells in them, this affords them ample encouragement to expect the assistance of God in all their necessities, because they experience him to be their Father in an affair of such vast importance. And even this they cannot attain, unless they have first apprehended the Divine goodness, confirmed by no other assurance but that of the promise. For if they begin to estimate it by their good works, nothing will be weaker or more uncertain; for, if their works be estimated in themselves, their imperfection will menace them with the wrath of God, as much as their purity, however incomplete, testifies his benevolence. In a word, they declare the benefits of God, but in such a way as not to divert from his gratuitous favour, in which Paul assures us there is "length, and breadth, and depth, and height;" as though he had said, Which way soever the pious turn their views, how highly soever they ascend, how widely soever they expatiate, yet they ought not to go beyond the love of Christ, but employ themselves wholly in meditating on it, because it comprehends in itself all dimensions. Therefore he says that it "passeth knowledge," and that when we know how much Christ hath loved us, we are "filled with all the fulness of God." (*k*) So also in another place, when he glories that the faithful are victorious in every conflict, he immediately adds, as the reason of it, "through him that loved us." (*l*)

XX. We see now, that the confidence which the saints have in their works is not such as either ascribes any thing to the merit of them (since they view them only as the gifts of God, in which they acknowledge his goodness, and as marks of their

(*h*) Prov. xiv. 26. (*i*) 2 Kings xx. 3. (*k*) Ephes. iii. 18, 19. (*l*) Rom. viii. 37.

calling, whence they infer their election) or derogates the least from the gratuitous righteousness which we obtain in Christ; since it depends upon it, and cannot subsist without it. This is concisely and elegantly represented by Augustine, when he says, "I do not say to the Lord, Despise not the works of my hands. I have sought the Lord with my hands, and I have not been deceived. But I commend not the works of my hands; for I fear that when thou hast examined them, thou wilt find more sin than merit. This only I say, this I ask, this I desire: Despise not the works of thy hands. Behold in me thy work, not mine. For if thou beholdest mine, thou condemnest me; if thou beholdest thine own, thou crownest me. Because whatever good works I have, they are from thee." He assigns two reasons why he ventured not to boast of his works to God; first, that if he has any good ones, he sees nothing of his own in them; secondly, that even these are buried under a multitude of sins. Hence the conscience experiences more fear and consternation than security. Therefore he desires God to behold his best performances, only that he may recognise in them the grace of his own calling, and perfect the work which he hath begun.

XXI. The remaining objection is, that the Scripture represents the good works of the faithful as the causes for which the Lord blesses them. But this must be understood, so as not to affect what we have before proved, that the efficient cause of our salvation is the love of God the Father; the material cause, the obedience of the Son; the instrumental cause, the illumination of the Spirit, that is, faith; and the final cause, the glory of the infinite goodness of God. No obstacle arises from these things to prevent good works being considered by the Lord as inferior causes. But how does this happen? Because those whom his mercy hath destined to the inheritance of eternal life, he in his ordinary dispensations introduces to the possession of it by good works. That which in the order of his dispensations precedes, he denominates the cause of that which follows. For this reason he sometimes deduces eternal life from works; not that the acceptance of it is to be referred to them; but because he justifies the objects of his election, that he may finally glorify them, he makes the former favour, which is a

step to the succeeding one, in some sense the cause of it. But whenever the true cause is to be assigned, he does not direct us to take refuge in works, but confines our thoughts entirely to his mercy. For what does he teach us by the apostle? "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Why does he not oppose righteousness to sin, as well as life to death? Why does he not make righteousness the cause of life, as well as sin the cause of death? For then the antithesis would have been complete, whereas by this variation it is partly destroyed. But the apostle intended by this comparison to express a certain truth; That death is due to the demerits of men, and that life proceeds solely from the mercy of God. Lastly, these phrases denote rather the order of the Divine gifts, than the cause of them. In the accumulation of graces upon graces, God derives from the former a reason for adding the next, that he may not omit any thing necessary to the enrichment of his servants. And while he thus pursues his liberality, he would have us always to remember his gratuitous election, which is the source and original of all. For although he loves the gifts which he daily confers, as emanations from that fountain, yet it is our duty to adhere to that gratuitous acceptance, which alone can support our souls, and to connect the gifts of his Spirit, which he afterwards bestows on us, with the first cause, in such a manner as will not be derogatory to it.

CHAPTER XV.

Boasting of the Merit of Works, equally subversive of God's Glory in the Gift of Righteousness, and of the Certainty of Salvation.

WE have now discussed the principal branch of this subject; that because righteousness, if dependent on works, must inevitably be confounded in the sight of God, therefore it is contained exclusively in the mercy of God and the participation of Christ, and consequently in faith alone. Now it must be carefully remarked that this is the principal hinge on which the argument turns, that we may not be implicated in the common delusion, which equally affects the learned and the vulgar. For as soon as justification by faith or works becomes the subject of inquiry, they have immediate recourse to those passages which seem to attribute to works some degree of merit in the sight of God; as though justification by works would be fully evinced, if they could be proved to be of any value before God. We have already clearly demonstrated that the righteousness of works consists only in a perfect and complete observance of the law. Whence it follows, that no man is justified by works, but he who, being elevated to the summit of perfection, cannot be convicted even of the least transgression. This, therefore, is a different and separate question, whether, although works be utterly insufficient for the justification of men, they do not nevertheless merit the grace of God.

II. In the first place, with respect to the term *merit*, it is necessary for me to premise, that whoever first applied it to human works, as compared with the Divine judgment, shewed very little concern for the purity of the faith. I gladly abstain from all controversies about mere words, but I could wish that this sobriety had always been observed by Christian writers, that they had avoided the unnecessary adoption of terms not used in the Scriptures, and calculated to produce great offence but very little advantage. For what necessity was there for the introduction of the word *merit*, when the value of good works might be significantly expressed without offence by a different term? But the

great offence contained in it, appears in the great injury the world has received from it. The consummate haughtiness of its import can only obscure the Divine grace, and taint the minds of men with presumptuous arrogance. I confess, the ancient writers of the Church have generally used it, and I wish that their misuse of one word had not been the occasion of error to posterity. Yet they also declare in some places that they did not intend any thing prejudicial to the truth. For this is the language of Augustine in one passage; "Let human merit, which was lost by Adam, here be silent, and let the grace of God reign through Jesus Christ." Again; "The saints ascribe nothing to their own merits; they will ascribe all, O God, only to thy mercy." In another place; "And when a man sees that whatever good he has, he has it not from himself but from his God, he sees that all that is commended in him proceeds not from his own merits, but from the Divine mercy." We see how, by divesting man of the power of performing good actions, he likewise destroys the dignity of merit. Chrysostom says: "Our works, if there be any consequent on God's gratuitous vocation, are a retribution and a debt; but the gifts of God are grace, beneficence, and immense liberality." Leaving the name, however, let us rather attend to the thing. I have before cited a passage from Bernard; "As not to presume on our merits is sufficiently meritorious, so to be destitute of merits is sufficient for the judgment." But by the explanation immediately annexed, he properly softens the harshness of these expressions, when he says; "Therefore you should be concerned to have merits; and if you have them, you should know that they are given to you; you should hope for the fruit, the mercy of God; and you have escaped all danger of poverty, ingratitude, and presumption. Happy the Church which is not destitute, either of merits without presumption, or of presumption without merits." And just before he had fully shewn how pious his meaning was. "For concerning merits," he says, "why should the Church be solicitous, which has a more firm and secure foundation for glorying in the purpose of God? For God cannot deny himself; he will perform what he hath promised. If you have no reason for inquiring, on account of what merits we may hope for blessings; especially when you read, 'Not for your sakes, but for

my sake;' (*m*) it is sufficiently meritorious to know that merits are insufficient."

III. The Scripture shews what all our works are capable of meriting, when it represents them as unable to bear the Divine scrutiny, because they are full of impurity; and in the next place, what would be merited by the perfect observance of the law, if this could any where be found, when it directs us, "when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants;" (*n*) because we shall not have conferred any favour on God, but only have performed the duties incumbent on us, for which no thanks are due. Nevertheless, the good works which the Lord hath conferred on us, he denominates our own, and declares that he will not only accept, but also reward them. It is our duty to be animated by so great a promise, and to stir up our minds that we "be not weary in well doing," (*o*) and to be truly grateful for so great an instance of Divine goodness. It is beyond a doubt, that whatever is laudable in our works proceeds from the grace of God; and that we cannot properly ascribe the least portion of it to ourselves. If we truly and seriously acknowledge this truth, not only all confidence, but likewise all idea of merit, immediately vanishes. We, I say, do not, like the sophists, divide the praise of good works between God and man, but we preserve it to the Lord complete, entire, and uncontaminated. All that we attribute to man, is, that those works which were otherwise good are tainted and polluted by his impurity. For nothing proceeds from the most perfect man, which is wholly immaculate. Therefore let the Lord sit in judgment on the best of human actions, and he will indeed recognise in them his own righteousness, but man's disgrace and shame. Good works, therefore, are pleasing to God, and not unprofitable to the authors of them; and they will moreover receive the most ample blessings from God as their reward; not because they merit them, but because the Divine goodness has freely appointed them this reward. But what wickedness is it, not to be content with that Divine liberality which remunerates works destitute of merit with unmerited

(*m*) Ezek. xxxvi. 32. (*n*) Luke xvii. 10. (*o*) Gal. vi. 9. 2 Thess. iii. 13.

rewards, but with sacrilegious ambition still to aim at more, that what entirely originates in the Divine munificence may appear to be a compensation of the merit of works? Here I appeal to the common sense of every man. If he who, by the liberality of another, enjoys the use and profit of an estate, usurp to himself also the title of proprietor; does he not by such ingratitude deserve to lose the possession which he had? So also if a slave, manumitted by his master, conceal the mean condition of a freed-man, and boast that he was free by birth; does he not deserve to be reduced to his former servitude? For this is the legitimate way of enjoying a benefit, if we neither arrogate more than is given us, nor defraud our benefactor of his due praise; but, on the contrary, conduct ourselves in such a manner, that what he has conferred on us may appear, as it were, to continue with himself. If this moderation ought to be observed towards men, let every one examine and consider what is due to God.

IV. I know that the sophists abuse some texts in order to prove that the term *merit* is found in the Scriptures with reference to God. They cite a passage from Ecclesiasticus; "Mercy shall make place for every man according to the merit of his works." (*p*) And from the Epistle to the Hebrews: "To do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices men merit of God." (*q*) My right to reject the authority of Ecclesiasticus I at present relinquish; but I deny that they faithfully cite the words of the writer of Ecclesiasticus, whoever he might be: for in the Greek copy it is as follows: Πᾶσι ἐλεημοσύνη ποιήσει τόπον· ἕκαστος γὰρ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ ἰσθήσει. "He shall make place for every mercy; and every man shall find according to his works." And that this is the genuine reading, which is corrupted in the Latin version, appears both from the complexion of the words themselves and from the preceding context. In the passage quoted from the Epistle to the Hebrews, there is no reason why they should endeavour to ensnare us by a single word, when the apostle's words in the Greek imply nothing more than that "with such sacrifices God is well pleased." This alone ought to be abundantly sufficient to repress

(*p*) Eccles. xvi. 14.

(*q*) Heb. xiii. 16.

and subdue the insolence of our pride, that we transgress not the scriptural rule by ascribing any dignity to human works. Moreover, the doctrine of the Scripture is, that our good works are perpetually defiled with many blemishes, which might justly offend God and incense him against us; so far are they from being able to conciliate his favour, or to excite his beneficence towards us; yet that, because in his great mercy he does not examine them according to the rigour of his justice, he accepts them as though they were immaculately pure, and therefore rewards them, though void of all merit, with infinite blessings both in this life and in that which is to come. For I cannot admit the distinction laid down by some, who are otherwise men of learning and piety, that good works merit the graces which are conferred on us in this life, and that eternal salvation is the reward of faith alone: because the Lord almost always places the reward of labours and the crown of victory in heaven. Besides, to ascribe the accumulation of graces upon graces, given us by the Lord, to the merit of works, in such a manner as to detract it from grace, is contrary to the doctrine of the Scripture. For though Christ says, that "to every one that hath shall be given;" and that "the good and faithful servant, who hath been faithful over a few things, shall be made ruler over many things:" (r) yet he likewise shews in another place, that the improvements of the faithful are the gifts of his gratuitous kindness. "Ho, every one that thirsteth," says he, "come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." (s) Whatever, therefore, is now conferred on the faithful to promote their salvation as well as their future blessedness, flows exclusively from the beneficence of God; nevertheless he declares, that both in the latter and in the former, he hath respect to our works, because to demonstrate the magnitude of his love to us, he dignifies with such honour, not only ourselves, but even the gifts which he hath bestowed on us.

V. If these points had been handled and digested in proper order in former ages, there would never have arisen so many

(r) Matt. xxv. 21, 29.

(s) Isaiah lv. 1.

debates and dissensions. Paul says, that in erecting the superstructure of Christian doctrine, it is necessary to retain that foundation which he had laid among the Corinthians, other than which no man can lay, which is Jesus Christ. (*t*) What kind of a foundation have we in Christ? Has he begun our salvation, that we may complete it ourselves? and has he merely opened a way for us to proceed in by our own powers? By no means: but, as the apostle before stated, when we acknowledge him, he is “made unto us righteousness.” (*u*) No man, therefore, is properly founded on Christ, but he who has complete righteousness in him; since the apostle says, that he was sent, not to assist us in the attainment of righteousness, but to be himself our righteousness. That is to say, that we were chosen in him from eternity before the formation of the world, not on account of any merit of ours, but according to the purpose of the Divine will; (*w*) that by the death of Christ we are redeemed from the sentence of death, and liberated from perdition; (*x*) that in him we are adopted as sons and heirs by the heavenly Father, (*y*) to whom we have been reconciled by his blood; that being committed to his protection, we are not in the least danger of perishing; (*z*) that being thus ingrafted into him, we are already, as it were, partakers of eternal life, and entered by hope into the kingdom of God; and moreover, that having obtained such a participation of him, however foolish we may be in ourselves, he is our wisdom before God; that however impure we are, he is our purity; that though we are weak and exposed to Satan, yet that power is ours which is given to him in heaven and in earth, (*a*) by which he defeats Satan for us, and breaks the gates of hell; that though we still carry about with us a body of death, yet he is our life: in short, that all that is his belongs to us, and that we have every thing in him, but nothing in ourselves. On this foundation, I say, it is necessary for us to build, if we wish to “grow unto an holy temple in the Lord.” (*b*)

VI. But the world has long been taught a different lesson; for I know not what good works of morality have been invented to render men acceptable to God, before they are ingrafted

(*t*) 1 Cor. iii. 10, 11. (*u*) 1 Cor. i. 30. (*w*) Ephes. i. 3—5. (*x*) Col. i. 14, 20, 21. (*y*) John i. 12. (*z*) John x. 28, 29. (*a*) Matt. xxviii. 18. (*b*) Ephes. ii. 21. Titus iii. 7.

into Christ. As though the Scripture were false in asserting, that "he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." (c) If they are destitute of life, how could they generate any cause of life? As though there were no truth in the declaration, that "whatsoever is not of faith, is sin?" (d) as though an evil tree could produce good fruits. But what room have these most pestilent sophists left to Christ for the exertion of his power? They say that he has merited for us the first grace: that is, the opportunity of meriting; and that now it is our part not to miss the offered opportunity. What extreme impudence and impiety! Who would have expected that any persons professing the name of Christ, would presume thus to rob him of his power, and almost to trample him under their feet? It is every where testified of him, that all who believe in him are justified: (e) these men tell us, that the only benefit received from him is, that a way is opened for all men to justify themselves. But I wish that they had experienced what is contained in these passages: "He that hath the Son, hath life;" (f) "he that believeth, is passed from death unto life;" (g) "justified by his grace," that we might "be made heirs of eternal life;" (h) that believers have Christ abiding in them, by whom they are united to God; (i) that they are partakers of his life, and sit with him "in heavenly places;" (k) that they are translated into the kingdom of God, and have obtained salvation; (l) and innumerable places of similar import. For they do not signify that by faith in Christ we merely gain the ability to attain righteousness or effect our salvation, but that both are bestowed on us. Therefore, as soon as we are ingrafted into Christ by faith, we are already become sons of God, heirs of heaven, partakers of righteousness, possessors of life, and (the better to refute their falsehoods) we have attained, not the opportunity of meriting, but all the merits of Christ; for they are all communicated to us.

VII. Thus the Sorbonic schools, those sources of all kinds of errors, have deprived us of justification by faith, which is the substance of all piety. They grant indeed in words, that a

(c) 1 John v. 12.

(d) Rom. xiv. 23.

(e) Acts xiii. 39.

(f) 1 John v. 12.

(g) John v. 24.

(h) Rom. iii. 24.

(i) 1 John iii. 24.

(k) Ephes. ii. 6.

(l) Col. i. 13.

man is justified by faith formed; but this they afterwards explain to be, because faith renders good works effectual to justification; so that their mention of faith has almost the appearance of mockery, since it could not be passed over in silence, while the Scripture is so full of it, without exposing them to great censure. And not content with this, they rob God of part of the praise of good works, and transfer it to man. Perceiving that good works avail but little to the exaltation of man, and that they cannot properly be denominated merits if they be considered as the effects of Divine grace, they derive them from the power of free-will; which is like extracting oil from a stone. They contend, that though grace be the principal cause of them, yet that this is not to the exclusion of free-will, from which all merit originates. And this is maintained not only by the latter sophists, but likewise by their master, Lombard, whom, when compared with them, we may pronounce to be sound and sober. Truly wonderful was their blindness, with Augustine so frequently in their mouths, not to see how solicitously he endeavoured to prevent men from arrogating the least degree of glory on account of good works. Before, when we discussed the question of free-will, we cited from him some testimonies to this purpose; and similar ones frequently recur in his writings; as when he forbids us ever to boast of our merits, since even they are the gifts of God; and when he says, "that all our merit proceeds from grace alone, that it is not obtained by our sufficiency, but is produced entirely by grace," &c. That Lombard was blind to the light of Scripture, in which he appears not to have been so well versed, need not excite so much surprise. Yet nothing could be wished for more explicit, in opposition to him and his disciples, than this passage of the apostle; who having interdicted Christians from all boasting, subjoins as a reason why boasting is unlawful, that "we are his (God's) workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (m) Since nothing good, then, can proceed from us but as we are regenerated, and our regeneration is without exception entirely of God, we have no right to arrogate to our-

(m) Ephes. ii. 10.

selves the smallest particle of our good works. Lastly, while they assiduously inculcate good works, they at the same time instruct the consciences of men in such a manner, that they can never dare to be confident that God is propitious and favourable to their works. But on the contrary, our doctrine, without any mention of merit, animates the minds of the faithful with peculiar consolation, while we teach them that their works are pleasing to God, and that their persons are undoubtedly accepted by him. And we likewise require, that no man attempt or undertake any work without faith; that is, unless he can previously determine, with a certain confidence of mind, that it will be pleasing to God.

VIII. Wherefore let us not suffer ourselves to be seduced even a hair's breadth from the only foundation, on which, when it is laid, wise architects erect a firm and regular superstructure. For if there be a necessity for doctrine and exhortation, they apprise us, that "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil: whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin:" (*n*) "the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles:" (*o*) the elect of God are vessels of mercy selected to honour; and therefore ought to be cleansed from all impurity. (*p*) But every thing is said at once, when it is shewn that Christ chooses such for his disciples as will deny themselves, take up their cross and follow him. (*r*) He who has denied himself, has laid the axe to the root of all evils, that he may no longer seek those things which are his own: he who has taken up his cross, has prepared himself for all patience and gentleness. But the example of Christ comprehends not only these, but all other duties of piety and holiness. He was obedient to his Father, even to death; he was entirely occupied in performing the works of God; he aspired with his whole soul to promote the glory of his Father; he laid down his life for his brethren; he both acted and prayed for the benefit of his enemies. But if there be need of consolation, these passages will afford it in a wonderful degree; "We are troubled on every

(*n*) 1 John iii. 8, 9.(*p*) 2 Tim. ii. 20. Rom. ix. 23.(*o*) 1 Peter iv. 3.(*r*) Luke ix. 23.

side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” (s) “If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” (t) “Being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” (u) The Father hath predestinated all whom he hath chosen in his Son “to be conformed to his image, that he might be the first-born among many brethren;” and therefore “neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus;” (w) but “all things shall work together for good” (x) to us, and conduce to our salvation. We do not justify men by works before God; but we say, that all who are of God are regenerated and made new creatures, that they may depart from the kingdom of sin into the kingdom of righteousness; and that by this testimony they ascertain their vocation, (y) and, like trees, are judged by their fruits.

CHAPTER XVI.

A Refutation of the injurious Calumnies of the Papists against this Doctrine.

THE observation with which we closed the preceding chapter is, of itself, sufficient to refute the impudence of some impious persons, who accuse us, in the first place, of destroying good works, and seducing men from the pursuit of them, when we say that they are not justified by works, nor saved through their own merit; and secondly, of making too easy a road to righteousness, when we teach that it consists in the gratuitous remission of sins, and of enticing men by this allurements to

(s) 2 Cor. iv. 8—10.

(t) 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

(u) Phil. iii. 10, 11.

(w) Rom. viii. 29, 38, 39.

(x) Rom. viii. 28.

(y) 2 Peter i. 10.

the practice of sin, to which they have naturally too strong a propensity. These calumnies, I say, are sufficiently refuted by that one observation; yet I will briefly reply to them both. They allege that justification by faith destroys good works. I forbear any remarks on the characters of these zealots for good works, who thus calumniate us. Let them rail with impunity as licentiously as they infest the whole world with the impurity of their lives. They affect to lament that while faith is so magnificently extolled, works are degraded from their proper rank. What if they be more encouraged and established? For we never dream either of a faith destitute of good works, or of a justification unattended by them: this is the sole difference, that while we acknowledge a necessary connection between faith and good works, we attribute justification, not to works, but to faith. Our reason for this we can readily explain, if we only turn to Christ, towards whom faith is directed, and from whom it receives all its virtue. Why then are we justified by faith? Because by faith we apprehend the righteousness of Christ, which is the only medium of our reconciliation to God. But this you cannot attain, without at the same time attaining to sanctification: for he "is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." (z) Christ therefore justifies no one whom he does not also sanctify. For these benefits are perpetually and indissolubly connected, so that whom he illuminates with his wisdom, them he redeems; whom he redeems, he justifies; whom he justifies, he sanctifies. But as the present question relates only to righteousness and sanctification, let us insist upon them. We may distinguish between them, but Christ contains both inseparably in himself. Do you wish then to obtain righteousness in Christ? You must first possess Christ, but you cannot possess him without becoming a partaker of his sanctification; for he cannot be divided. Since then the Lord affords us the enjoyment of these blessings, only in the bestowment of himself, he gives them both together; and never one without the other. Thus we see how true it is that we are justified, not without works, yet not by works;

(z) 1 Cor. i. 30.

since union with Christ, by which we are justified, contains sanctification as well as righteousness.

II. It is also exceedingly false, that the minds of men are seduced from an inclination to virtue, by our divesting them of all ideas of merit. Here the reader must just be informed, that they impertinently argue from reward to merit, as I shall afterwards more fully explain: because, in fact, they are ignorant of this principle, that God is equally liberal in assigning a reward to good works, as in imparting an ability to perform them. But this I would rather defer to its proper place. It will suffice at present, to shew the weakness of their objection, which shall be done two ways. For first, when they say that there will be no concern about the proper regulation of our life without a hope of reward being proposed, they altogether deceive themselves. If they only mean that men serve God in expectation of a reward, and let or sell their services to him, they gain but little; for he will be freely worshipped and freely loved, and he approves of that worshipper who, after being deprived of all hope of receiving any reward, still ceases not to worship him. Besides, if men require to be stimulated, it is impossible to urge more forcible arguments than those which arise from the end of our redemption and calling; such as the Word of God adduces, when it inculcates, that it is the greatest and most impious ingratitude not reciprocally to "love him who first loved us;" (a) that "by the blood of Christ our consciences are purged from dead works, to serve the living God;" (b) that it is a horrible sacrilege, after having been once purged, to defile ourselves with new pollutions, and to profane that sacred blood; (c) that we have been "delivered out of the hand of our enemies," that we "might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life;" (d) that we are made "free from sin," that with a free spirit we might "become the servants of righteousness;" (e) "that our old man is crucified," that "we should walk in newness of life." (f) Again, "If ye be risen with Christ," as his members indeed are, "seek those things which are above," and

(a) 1 John iv. 10, 19.
(d) Luke i. 74, 75.

(b) Heb. ix. 14.
(e) Rom. vi. 18.

(c) Heb. x. 29.
(f) Rom. vi. 4, 6.

conduct yourselves as “pilgrims on the earth;” that you may aspire towards heaven, where your treasure is. (*g*) That “the grace of God hath appeared, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour.” (*h*) Wherefore “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Christ.” (*i*) That we are the “temples of the Holy Ghost,” which it is unlawful to profane; (*k*) that we are not *darkness* “but light in the Lord,” whom it becomes to “walk as children of the light;” (*l*) that “God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness; for this is the will of God even our sanctification, that we should abstain from fornication;” (*m*) that our calling is a holy one, which should be followed by a correspondent purity of life; (*n*) that we are “made free from sin,” that we might “become servants of righteousness.” (*o*) Can we be incited to charity by any stronger argument than that of John, “If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil;” (*p*) hereby the children of light, by their abiding in love, are distinguished from the children of darkness: Or that of Paul, That if we be united to Christ, we are members of one body, and ought to afford each other mutual assistance? (*q*) Or can we be more powerfully excited to holiness, than when we are informed by John, that “every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as God is pure?” (*r*) Or when Paul says, “Having therefore these promises (relative to our adoption), let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit?” (*s*) Or than when we hear Christ proposing himself as our example, that we should follow his steps? (*t*)

III. These few instances, indeed, I have given as a specimen; for if I were disposed to pursue every particular passage, I should produce a large volume. The apostles are quite full

(*g*) Col. iii. 1. Heb. xi. 13. 1 Peter ii. 11. (*h*) Titus ii. 11—13. (*i*) 1 Thess. v. 9.
 (*k*) 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. vi. 19. Ephes. ii. 21. (*l*) Ephes. v. 8. (*m*) 1 Thess. iv. 3, 7.
 (*n*) 2 Tim. i. 9. 1 Peter i. 15. (*o*) Rom. vi. 18. (*p*) 1 John iv. 11. iii. 10.
 (*q*) 1 Cor. xii. 12, &c. (*r*) 1 John iii. 3. (*s*) 2 Cor. vii. 1.
 (*t*) Matt. xi. 29. John xiii. 15.

of admonitions, exhortations, and reproofs, to “furnish the man of God unto all good works,” (v) and that without any mention of merit. But they rather deduce their principal exhortations from this consideration, That our salvation depends not on any merit of ours, but merely on the mercy of God. As Paul, after having very largely shewn that we can have no hope of life, but from the righteousness of Christ, when he proceeds to exhortations, beseeches us “by the mercies of God” with which we have been favoured. (u) And indeed this one reason ought to be enough; that God may be glorified in us. (w) But if any persons be not so powerfully affected by the glory of God, yet the remembrance of his benefits should be amply sufficient to incite them to rectitude of conduct. But these men, who by the obtrusion of merit extort some servile and constrained acts of obedience to the law, are guilty of falsehood when they affirm that we have no arguments to enforce the practice of good works, because we do not proceed in the same way. Although, truly, such obedience were very pleasing to God, who declares that he “loveth a cheerful giver;” and forbids any thing to be given “grudgingly, or of necessity.” (x) Nor do I say this, because I either reject or neglect that kind of exhortation, which the Scripture frequently uses, that no method of animating us to our duty may be omitted. It mentions the reward which “God will render to every man according to his works;” (y) but that this is the only argument, or the principal one, I deny. In the next place, I confess that we ought not to begin with it. Moreover, I contend that it has no tendency to establish the merit preached by these men, as we shall afterwards see; and, lastly, that it is entirely useless, unless preceded by this doctrine, That we are justified solely on account of the merit of Christ, apprehended by faith, and not on account of any merit in our own works; because none can be capable of the pursuit of holiness, but such as have previously imbibed this doctrine. This sentiment is beautifully suggested by the Psalmist when he thus addresses the Lord; “There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be fear-

(v) 2 Tim. iii. 17.

(x) 2 Cor. ix. 7.

(u) Rom. xii. 1.

(y) Matt. xvi. 27. Rom. ii. 6.

(w) Matt. v. 16.

ed:" (z) for he shews that there is no worship of God without an acknowledgement of his mercy, on which alone it is both founded and established. And this well deserves to be remarked, in order that we may know, not only that the true worship of God arises from a reliance on his mercy, but that the fear of God (which the Papists hold to be meritorious) cannot be dignified with the title of *merit*, because it is founded in the pardon and remission of sins.

IV. But the most futile of all their calumnies is, that men are encouraged to the practice of sin by our maintaining the gratuitous remission of sins, in which we make righteousness to consist. For we say that so great a blessing could never be compensated by any virtue of ours, and that therefore it could never be obtained, unless it were gratuitously bestowed; moreover, that it is gratuitous to us indeed, but not so to Christ, whom it cost so much, even his own most sacred blood, beside which no price sufficiently valuable could be paid to Divine justice. When men are taught in this manner, they are apprised that it is not owing to them that this most sacred blood is not shed as often as they sin. Besides, we learn that such is our pollution, that it can never be washed away, except in the fountain of this immaculate blood. Must not persons who hear these things conceive a greater horror of sin, that if it were said to be cleansed by a sprinkling of good works? And if they have any fear of God, will they not dread, after being once purified, to plunge themselves again into the mire, and thereby to disturb and infect, as far as they can, the purity of this fountain? "I have washed my feet," (says the believing soul in Solomon) "how shall I defile them?" (a) Now it is plain, which party better deserves the charge of degrading the value of remission of sins, and prostituting the dignity of righteousness. They pretend that God is appeased by their frivolous *satisfactions*, which are no better than dung; we assert, that the guilt of sin is too atrocious to be expiated by such insignificant trifles; that the displeasure of God is too great to be appeased by these worthless satisfactions; and therefore that this is the exclusive prerogative of the blood of Christ. They say, that righteousness, if it ever be defective,

(z) Psalm cxxx. 4.

(a) Cant. v. 3.

is restored and repaired by works of satisfaction. We think it so valuable that no compensation of works can be adequate to it; and therefore that for its restitution we must have recourse to the mercy of God alone. The remaining particulars that pertain to the remission of sins may be found in the next chapter.



CHAPTER XVII.

The Harmony between the Promises of the Law and those of the Gospel.

LET us now pursue the other arguments with which Satan by his satellites attempts to destroy or to weaken justification by faith. I think we have already gained this point with these calumniators; that they can no longer accuse us of being enemies to good works. For we reject the notion of justification by works, not that no good works may be done, or that those which are performed may be denied to be good, but that we may neither confide in them, nor glory in them, nor ascribe salvation to them. For this is our trust, this is our glory, and the only anchor of our salvation, That Christ the Son of God is ours, and that we are likewise in him sons of God, and heirs of the celestial kingdom, being called, not for our worthiness, but by the Divine goodness, to the hope of eternal felicity. But since they assail us besides, as we have observed, with other weapons, let us also proceed to the repulsion of them. In the first place, they return to the legal promises which the Lord gave to the observers of his law, and inquire whether we suppose them to be entirely vain, or of any validity. As it would be harsh and ridiculous to say they are vain, they take it for granted that they have some efficacy. Hence they argue, that we are not justified by faith alone. For thus saith the Lord, "Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto

thy fathers; and he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee." (b) Again, "If ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not, neither walk after other gods; then will I cause you to dwell in this place," &c. (c) I am not willing to recite a thousand passages of the same kind, which, not being different in sense, will be elucidated by an explanation of these. The sum of all is declared by Moses, who says that in the law are proposed "a blessing and a curse, life and death." (d) Now they argue, either that this blessing becomes inefficacious and nugatory, or that justification is not by faith alone. We have already shewn, how, if we adhere to the law, being destitute of every blessing, we are obnoxious to the curse which is denounced on all transgressors. For the Lord promises nothing, except to the perfect observers of his law, of which description not one can be found. The consequence then is, that all mankind are proved by the law to be obnoxious to the curse and wrath of God; in order to be saved from which, they need deliverance from the power of the law and emancipation from its servitude; not a carnal liberty, which would seduce us from obedience to the law, invite to all kinds of licentiousness, break down the barriers of inordinate desire, and give the reins to every lawless passion; but a spiritual liberty, which will console and elevate a distressed and dejected conscience, shewing it to be delivered from the curse and condemnation under which it was held by the law. This liberation from subjection to the law, and manumission, (if I may use the term,) we attain, when we apprehend by faith the mercy of God in Christ, by which we are assured of the remission of sins, by the sense of which the law penetrated us with legal compunction and remorse.

II. For this reason all the promises of the law would be ineffectual and vain, unless we were assisted by the goodness of God in the Gospel. For the condition of a perfect obedience to the law, on which they depend, and in consequence of which alone they are to be fulfilled, will never be performed. Now the Lord affords this assistance, not by leaving a part of righte-

(b) Deut. vii. 12, 13.

(c) Jer. vii. 5—7.

(d) Deut. xi. 26. xxx. 15.

ousness in our works, and supplying part from his mercy, but by appointing Christ alone for the completion of righteousness. For the apostle having said that he and other Jews, "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, believed in Christ;" adds as a reason, not that they might be assisted to obtain a complete righteousness by faith in Christ, but "that they might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law." (e) If the faithful pass from the law to faith, to find righteousness in the latter, which they perceive to be wanting in the former; they certainly renounce the righteousness of the law. Therefore let whosoever will now amplify the rewards which are said to await the observer of the law; only let him remark, that our depravity prevents us from receiving any benefit from them, till we have obtained by faith another righteousness. Thus David, after having mentioned the reward which the Lord hath prepared for his servants, immediately proceeds to the acknowledgment of sins, by which it is annulled. In the nineteenth Psalm, likewise, he magnificently celebrates the benefits of the law; but immediately exclaims, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults." (f) This passage perfectly accords with that before referred to, where, after having said, "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies;" he adds, "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." (g) So we ought also to acknowledge, that the Divine favour is offered to us in the law, if we could purchase it by our works; but that no merit of ours can ever obtain it.

III. What then, it will be said, were those promises given, to vanish away without producing any effect? I have already declared that this is not my opinion. I assert, indeed, that they have no efficacy with respect to us as long as they are referred to the merit of works; wherefore, considered in themselves, they are in some sense abolished. Thus that grand promise, "Keep my statutes and judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them;" (h) the apostle maintains to be of no value to us, if we rest upon it, and that it will be no more beneficial to us than if it had never been given; because it is inapplicable to the

(e) Gal. ii. 16.

(f) Psalm xix. 12.

(g) Psalm xxv. 10, 11.

(h) Lev. xviii. 5.

holiest of God's servants, who are all far from fulfilling the law, and are encompassed with a multitude of transgressions. (i) But when these are superseded by the evangelical promises, which proclaim the gratuitous remission of sins, the consequence is, that not only our persons but also our works are accepted by God; and not accepted only, but followed by those blessings, which were due by the covenant to the observance of the law. I grant, therefore, that the works of the faithful are rewarded by those things which the Lord hath promised in his law to the followers of righteousness and holiness; but in this retribution it is always necessary to consider the cause, which conciliates such favour to those works. Now this we perceive to be threefold; The first is, that God, averting his eyes from the actions of his servants, which are invariably more deserving of censure than of praise, receives and embraces them in Christ, and by the intervention of faith alone reconciles them to himself without the assistance of works. The second is, That in his paternal benignity and indulgence, he overlooks the intrinsic worth of these works, and exalts them to such honour, that he esteems them of some degree of value. The third cause is, That he pardons these works as he receives them, not imputing the imperfection with which they are all so defiled, that they might otherwise be accounted rather sins than virtues. Hence it appears how great has been the delusion of the sophists, who thought that they had dexterously avoided all absurdities by saying that works are sufficient to merit salvation, not on account of their own intrinsic goodness, but by reason of the covenant, because the Lord in his mercy hath estimated them so highly. But at the same time they had not observed, how far the works, which they styled *meritorious*, fell short of the condition of the promise; unless they were preceded by justification founded on faith alone, and by remission of sins, by which even good works require to be purified from blemishes. Therefore, of the three causes of the Divine goodness, in consequence of which the works of the faithful are accepted, they only noticed one, and suppressed two others, and those the principal.

IV. They allege the declaration of Peter, which Luke re-

(i) Rom. x. 5, &c.

cites in the Acts; "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that worketh righteousness is accepted with him." (*k*) And hence they conclude, what appears to admit of no doubt, that if a man by rectitude of conduct conciliate to himself the favour of God, the grace of God is not the sole cause of his salvation: moreover, that God of his own mercy assists a sinner in such a manner, as to be influenced to the exercise of mercy by his works. But we cannot by any means reconcile the Scriptures with themselves, unless we observe a twofold acceptance of man with God. For God finds nothing in man, in his native condition, to incline him to mercy, but mere misery. If then it is evident that man is entirely destitute of all good, and full of every kind of evil, when he is first received by God; by what good qualities shall we pronounce him entitled to the heavenly calling? Let us reject, therefore, all vain imagination of merits, where God so evidently displays his unmerited clemency. The declaration of the angel to Cornelius in the same passage; "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God;" they most wickedly pervert to prove that the practice of good works prepares a man to receive the grace of God. For Cornelius must have been already illuminated with the Spirit of wisdom, since he was endued with the fear of God, which is true wisdom; and he must have been sanctified by the same Spirit, since he was a follower of righteousness, which the apostle represents as one of the Spirit's most certain fruits. (*l*) It was from the grace of God, then, that he derived all these things in which he is said to have pleased him; so far was he from preparing himself to receive it by the exercise of his own powers. There cannot indeed be adduced a single syllable of the Scripture, which is not in harmony with this doctrine; That there is no other cause for God's reception of man into his love, than his knowledge that man, if abandoned by him, would be utterly lost; and because it is not his will to abandon him to perdition, he displays his mercy in his deliverance. Now we see that this acceptance is irrespective of the righteousness of man, but is

(*k*) Acts x. 34, 35.

(*l*) Gal. v. 5.

an unequivocal proof of the Divine goodness towards miserable sinners, who are infinitely unworthy of so great a favour.

V. After the Lord hath recovered a man from the abyss of perdition, and separated him to himself by the grace of adoption; because he hath regenerated him and raised him to a new life, he now receives and embraces him, as a new creature, with the gifts of his Spirit. This is the acceptance mentioned by Peter, in which even the works of the faithful after their vocation are approved by God; for the Lord cannot but love and accept those good effects which are produced in them by his Spirit. But it must always be remembered, that they are accepted by God in consequence of their works, only because, for their sakes and the favour which he bears to them, he deigns to accept whatever goodness he hath liberally communicated to their works. For whence proceeds the goodness of their works, but from the Lord's determination to adorn with true purity those whom he hath chosen as vessels of honour? And how is it that they are accounted good, as though they were free from all imperfection, except from the mercy of their Father, who pardons the blemishes which adhere to them? In a word, Peter intends nothing else in this passage, but that God accepts and loves his children, in whom he beholds the marks and lineaments of his own countenance: for we have elsewhere shewn that regeneration is a reparation of the Divine image in us. Wherever the Lord contemplates his own likeness, he justly both loves and honours it. The life of his children, therefore, being devoted to holiness and righteousness, is truly represented as pleasing to him. But as the faithful, while they are surrounded with mortal flesh, are still sinners, and all their works are imperfect, and tainted with the vices of the flesh, he cannot be propitious either to their persons or to their works, without regarding them in Christ rather than in themselves. It is in this sense that those passages must be understood, which declare God to be merciful and compassionate to the followers of righteousness. Moses said to the Israelites: "The Lord thy God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations:" (*m*) a sentence which was afterwards in frequent

use among that people. Thus Solomon, in his solemn prayer; "Lord God of Israel, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart."⁽ⁿ⁾ The same language is also repeated by Nehemiah.^(o) For as, in all the covenants of his mercy, the Lord stipulates with his servants for integrity and sanctity in their lives, that his goodness may not become an object of contempt, and that no man, infected with a vain confidence in his mercy,^(p) may bless himself in his mind while walking in the depravity of his heart; so he designs by these means to confine to their duty all that are admitted to the participation of his covenant; yet nevertheless the covenant is originally constituted and perpetually remains altogether gratuitous. For this reason, David, though he declares that he had been rewarded for the purity of his hands, does not overlook that original source which I have mentioned; "He delivered me, because he delighted in me;"^(q) where he commends the goodness of his cause, so as not to derogate from the gratuitous mercy, which precedes all the gifts that originate from it.

VI. And here it will be useful to remark, by the way, what difference there is between such forms of expression and the legal promises. By legal promises I intend, not all those which are contained in the books of Moses, since in those books there likewise occur many evangelical ones, but such as properly pertain to the ministry of the law. Such promises, by whatever appellation they may be distinguished, proclaim that a reward is ready to be bestowed, on condition that we perform what is commanded. But when it is said that "the Lord keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him," this rather designates the characters of his servants, who have faithfully received his covenant, than expresses the causes of his beneficence to them. Now this is the way to prove it; As the Lord favours us with the hope of eternal life, in order that he may be loved, revered, and worshipped by us, therefore all the promises of mercy contained in the Scriptures are justly directed to this end, that we may revere and worship the Author of

(n) 1 Kings viii. 23.

(p) Deut. xxix. 19, 20.

(o) Neh. i. 5.

(q) 2 Sam. xxii. 20, 21.

our blessings. Whenever, therefore, we hear of his beneficence to them who observe his laws, let us remember that the children of God are designated by the duty in which they ought always to be found; and that we are adopted as his children, in order that we may venerate him as our Father. Therefore, that we may not renounce the privilege of our adoption, we ought to aim at that which is the design of our vocation. On the other hand, however, we may be assured, that the accomplishment of God's mercy is independent of the works of the faithful; but that he fulfils the promise of salvation to them whose vocation is followed by a correspondent rectitude of life, because in them who are directed by his Spirit to good works, he recognises the genuine characters of his children. To this must be referred what is said of the citizens of the Church, "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness," &c. (r) And in Isaiah, "Who shall dwell with the devouring fire? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly," &c. (s) For these passages describe, not the foundation which supports the faithful before God, but the manner in which their most merciful Father introduces them into communion with him, and preserves and confirms them in it. For as he detests sin, and loves righteousness, those whom he unites to him he purifies by his Spirit, in order to conform them to himself and his kingdom. Therefore if it be inquired what is the first cause which gives the saints an entrance into the kingdom of God, and which makes their continuance in it permanent, the answer is ready; Because the Lord in his mercy hath once adopted and perpetually defends them. But if the question relate to the manner in which he does this, it will then be necessary to advert to regeneration and its fruits, which are enumerated in the Psalm that we have just quoted.

VII. But there appears to be much greater difficulty in those places, which dignify good works with the title of *righteousness*, and assert that a man is justified by them. Of the former kind there are many, where the observance of the commands is denominated *justification* or *righteousness*. An example of the

(r) Psalm xv. 1, 2.

(s) Isaiah xxxiii. 14, 15.

other kind we find in Moses; “And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments.” (t) If it be objected that this is a legal promise, which, having an impossible condition annexed to it, proves nothing; there are other passages which will not admit of a similar reply, such as, “In case thou shalt deliver him the pledge, &c. it shall be righteousness unto thee before the Lord.” (u) Similar to this is what the Psalmist says, that the zeal of Phinehas in avenging the disgrace of Israel, “was counted unto him for righteousness.” (w) Therefore the Pharisees of our day suppose that these passages afford ample ground for their clamour against us. For when we say that if the righteousness of faith be established, there is an end of justification by works; they argue, in the same manner, that if righteousness be by works, then it is not true that we are justified by faith alone. Though I grant that the precepts of the law are termed *righteousness*, there is nothing surprising in this; for they are so in reality. The reader, however, ought to be apprised that the Hebrew word עֲשֵׂה (commandments) is not well translated by the Greek word δικαιώματα (*righteousness*). But I readily relinquish all controversy respecting the word. Nor do we deny that the Divine law contains perfect righteousness. For although, being under an obligation to fulfil all its precepts, we should, even after a perfect obedience to it, only be unprofitable servants; yet since the Lord hath honoured the observance of it with the title of *righteousness*, we would not detract from what he hath given. We freely acknowledge, therefore, that the perfect obedience of the law is righteousness, and that the observance of every particular command is a part of righteousness; since complete righteousness consists of all the parts. But we deny that such a kind of righteousness any where exists. And therefore we reject the righteousness of the law; not that it is of itself defective and mutilated, but because, on account of the debility of our flesh, (x) it is no where to be found. It may be said, that the Scripture not only calls the Divine precepts *righteousnesses*, but gives this appellation also to the works of

(t) Deut. vi. 25.

(w) Psalm cvi. 30, 31.

(u) Deut. xxiv. 13.

(x) Rom. viii. 3.

the saints. As where it relates of Zechariah and his wife, that "they were both righteous before God, walking in all his commandments:" (y) certainly when it speaks thus, it estimates their works rather according to the nature of the law, than according to the actual condition of the persons. Here it is necessary to repeat the observation which I have just made, that no rule is to be drawn from the incautiousness of the Greek translator. But as Luke has not thought proper to alter the common version, neither will I contend for it. Those things which are commanded in the law, God hath enjoined upon man as necessary to righteousness; but that righteousness we do not fulfil without observing the whole law, which is broken by every act of transgression. Since the law, therefore, only prescribes a righteousness; if we contemplate the law itself, all its distinct commands are parts of righteousness; if we consider men, by whom they are performed, they cannot obtain the praise of righteousness from one act, while they are transgressors in many, and while that same act is partly vicious by reason of its imperfection.

VIII. But I proceed to the second class of texts, in which the principal difficulty lies. Paul urges nothing more forcible in proof of justification by faith, than what he states respecting Abraham; that he "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." (z) Since the action of Phinehas, therefore, is said to have been "counted unto him for righteousness:" (a) we may also use the same argument concerning works, which Paul insists on respecting faith. Therefore our adversaries, as though they had established the point, determine that we are justified neither without faith, nor by faith alone; and that our righteousness is completed by works. Therefore I conjure the faithful, if they know that the true rule of righteousness is to be sought in the Scripture alone, to accompany me in a serious and solemn examination how the Scripture may be properly reconciled with itself without any sophistry. Paul, knowing the righteousness of faith to be the refuge of those who are destitute of any righteousness of their own, boldly infers that all who are justified by faith, are excluded

(y) Luke i. 6.

(z) Rom. iv. 3. Gal. iii. 6.

(a) Psalm cvi. 31.

from the righteousness of works. It being likewise evident, on the other hand, that this is common to all the faithful, he with equal confidence concludes that no man is justified by works, but rather, on the contrary, that we are justified independently of all works. But it is one thing to dispute concerning the intrinsic value of works, and another, to argue respecting the place they ought to hold after the establishment of the righteousness of faith. If we are to determine the value of works by their own worthiness, we say that they are unworthy to appear in the sight of God; that there is nothing in our works of which we can glory before God; and consequently, that being divested of all assistance from works, we are justified by faith alone. Now we describe this righteousness in the following manner; That a sinner, being admitted to communion with Christ, is by his grace reconciled to God; while being purified by his blood, he obtains remission of sins, and being clothed with his righteousness, as if it were his own, he stands secure before the heavenly tribunal. Where remission of sins has been previously received, the good works which succeed are estimated far beyond their intrinsic merit; for all their imperfections are covered by the perfection of Christ, and all their blemishes are removed by his purity, that they may not be scrutinized by the Divine judgment. The guilt therefore of all transgressions, by which men are prevented from offering any thing acceptable to God, being obliterated; and the imperfection, which universally deforms even the good works of the faithful, being buried in oblivion, their works are accounted righteous, or, which is the same thing, are imputed for righteousness.

IX. Now if any one urge this to me as an objection, to oppose the righteousness of faith, I will first ask him, Whether a man be reputed righteous on account of one or two holy works, who is in the other actions of his life a transgressor of the law. This would be too absurd to be pretended. I shall next inquire, If he be reputed righteous on account of many good works, while he is found guilty of any instance of transgression. This likewise my adversary will not presume to maintain, in opposition to the sanction of the law, which denounces a curse on

all those who do not fulfil every one of its precepts. (b) I will further inquire, If there be any work, which does not deserve the charge of impurity or imperfection. (c) But how could this be possible before those eyes, in which the stars are not sufficiently pure, nor the angels completely righteous? Thus he will be compelled to concede, that there is not a good work to be found, which is not too much polluted, both by its own imperfection and by the transgressions with which it is attended, to have any claim to the honourable appellation of *righteousness*. Now if it be evidently in consequence of justification by faith, that works, otherwise impure and imperfect, unworthy of the sight of God, and much more of his approbation, are imputed for righteousness; why do they attempt, by boasting of the righteousness of works, to destroy the righteousness of faith, from which all righteousness of works proceeds? But do they wish to produce a viperous offspring to destroy the parent? For such is the true tendency of this impious doctrine. They cannot deny that justification by faith is the beginning, foundation, cause, motive, and substance of the righteousness of works; yet they conclude, that a man is not justified by faith, because good works also are imputed for righteousness. Let us therefore leave these impertinencies, and acknowledge the real state of the case: if all the righteousness which can be attributed to works depends on justification by faith, the latter is not only not diminished, but on the contrary is confirmed by it; since its influence appears the more extensive. But let us not suppose that works, subsequent to gratuitous justification, are so highly esteemed, that they succeed to the office of justifying men, or divide that office with faith. For unless justification by faith remain always unimpaired, the impurity of their works will be detected. Nor is there any absurdity in saying, that a man is justified by faith, so that he is not only righteous himself, but that even his works are accounted righteous beyond what they deserve.

X. In this way we will admit, not only a partial righteousness of works, which our opponents maintain, but such as is approved by God as though it were perfect and complete. A

(b) Deut. xxvii. 26.

(c) Job iv. 18. xv. 15. xxv. 5.

remembrance of the foundation on which it stands will solve every difficulty. For no work is ever acceptable, till it be received with pardon. Now whence proceeds pardon, but from God's beholding us and all our actions in Christ? When we are ingrafted into Christ, therefore, as our persons appear righteous before God, because our iniquities are covered by his righteousness; so our works are accounted righteous, because the sinfulness otherwise belonging to them is not imputed, being all buried in the purity of Christ. So we may justly assert, that not only our persons but even our works are justified by faith alone. Now, if this righteousness of works, whatever be its nature, is consequent and dependent on faith and gratuitous justification; it ought to be included under it, and subordinated to it, as an effect to its cause; so far is it from deserving to be exalted, either to destroy or to obscure the righteousness of faith. Thus Paul, to evince that our blessedness depends on the mercy of God, and not on our works, chiefly urges this declaration of David; "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (*d*) If, in opposition to this, the numerous passages be adduced where blessedness seems to be attributed to works; such as, "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord; (*g*) that hath mercy on the poor; (*h*) that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly; (*i*) that endureth temptation;" (*k*) "Blessed are they that keep judgment; (*l*) the undefiled, (*m*) the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful," &c. (*n*) they will not at all weaken the truth of what is advanced by Paul. For since no man ever attains these characters, so as to gain the Divine approbation; it appears, that men are always miserable till they are delivered from misery by the pardon of their sins. Since all the beatitudes celebrated in the Scriptures are of no avail, and no man can derive any benefit from them, till he has obtained blessedness by the remission of his sins, which then makes room for the other beatitudes; it follows that this is not merely the noblest and principal, but the only blessedness; unless indeed we suppose it to be diminished

(*d*) Rom. iv. 7, 8. Psalm xxxii. 1, 2.(*g*) Psalm cxii. 1.(*h*) Prov. xiv. 21.(*i*) Psalm i. 1.(*k*) James i. 12.(*l*) Psalm cvi. 3.(*m*) Psalm cxix. 1.(*n*) Matt. v. 3, 5, 7.

by those which are dependent on it. Now we have much less reason to be disturbed by the appellation of *righteous*, which is generally given to the faithful. I acknowledge that they are denominated *righteous* from the sanctity of their lives; but as they rather devote themselves to the pursuit of righteousness, than actually attain to righteousness itself, it is proper that this righteousness, such as it is, should be subordinate to justification by faith, from which it derives its origin.

XI. But our adversaries say that we have yet more difficulty with James, since he contradicts us in express terms. For he teaches, that "Abraham was justified by works," and that we are all "justified by works, and not by faith only." (o) What then? Will they draw Paul into a controversy with James? If they consider James as a minister of Christ, his declarations must be understood in some sense not at variance with Christ, when speaking by the mouth of Paul. The Spirit asserts, by the mouth of Paul, that Abraham obtained righteousness by faith, not by works; we likewise teach, that we are all justified by faith without the works of the law. The same Spirit affirms by James, that both Abraham's righteousness and ours consists in works and not in faith only. That the Spirit is not inconsistent with himself is a certain truth. But what harmony can there be between these two apparently opposite assertions? Our adversaries would be satisfied, if they could totally subvert the righteousness of faith, which we wish to be firmly established; but to afford tranquillity to the disturbed conscience, they feel very little concern. Hence we perceive, that they oppose the doctrine of justification by faith, but at the same time fix no certain rule of righteousness, by which the conscience may be satisfied. Let them triumph then as they please, if they can boast no other victory but that of having removed all certainty of righteousness. And this miserable victory, indeed, they will obtain, where, after having extinguished the light of truth, they are permitted by the Lord to spread the shades of error. But, wherever the truth of God remains, they will not prevail. I deny, therefore, that the assertion of James, which they hold up

(o) James ii. 21, 24.

against us as an impenetrable shield, affords them the least support. To evince this, we shall first examine the scope of the apostle, and then remark wherein they are deceived. Because there were many persons at that time, and the Church is perpetually infested with similar characters, who, by neglecting and omitting the proper duties of the faithful, manifestly betrayed their real infidelity, while they continued to glory in the false pretence of faith; James here exposes the foolish confidence of such persons. It is not his design then to diminish in any respect the virtue of true faith, but to shew the folly of these triflers, who were content with arrogating to themselves the vain image of it, and securely abandoned themselves to every vice. This statement being premised, it will be easy to discover where lies the error of our adversaries. For they fall into two fallacies; one respecting the word "faith," the other respecting the word "justification." When the apostle gives the appellation of *faith* to a vain notion, widely different from true faith, it is a concession which derogates nothing from the argument: this he shews from the beginning in these words; "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works?" (n) He does not say, If any one have faith without works; but, If any one boast of having it. He speaks still more plainly just after, where he ridicules it by representing it as worse than the knowledge of devils, and lastly, when he calls it *dead*. But his meaning may be sufficiently understood from the definition he gives: "Thou believest," says he, "that there is one God." Indeed, if nothing be contained in this creed but a belief of the Divine existence, it is not at all surprising that it is inadequate to justification. And we must not suppose this denial to be derogatory to Christian faith, the nature of which is widely different. For how does true faith justify, but by uniting us to Christ, that, being made one with him, we may participate his righteousness? It does not, therefore, justify us, by attaining a knowledge of God's existence, but by a reliance on the certainty of his mercy.

XII. But we shall not have ascertained the whole scope of the apostle, till we have exposed the other fallacies; for he at-

(n) James ii. 14.

tributes justification partly to works. If we wish to make James consistent with the rest of the Scriptures, and even with himself, we must understand the word "justify" in a different signification from that in which it is used by Paul. For we are said by Paul to be justified, when the memory of our unrighteousness is obliterated, and we are accounted righteous. If James had alluded to this, it would have been preposterous for him to make that quotation from Moses; "Abraham believed God," &c. (o) For he introduces it in the following manner: Abraham obtained righteousness by works, because he hesitated not to sacrifice his son at the command of God. And thus was the Scripture fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. If an effect antecedent to its cause be an absurdity, either Moses falsely asserts in that place, that Abraham's faith was imputed to him for righteousness, or Abraham did not obtain righteousness by his obedience, displayed in the oblation of his son. Abraham was justified by faith, while Ishmael, who arrived at adolescence before the birth of Isaac, was not yet conceived. How then can we ascribe his justification to an act of obedience performed so long after? Wherefore, either James improperly inverted the order of events, (which it is unlawful to imagine,) or, by saying that Abraham was justified, he did not mean that the patriarch deserved to be accounted righteous. What then was his meaning? He evidently appears to speak of a declaration of righteousness before men, and not of an imputation of it in the sight of God; as though he had said; They who are justified by true faith, prove their justification, not by a barren and imaginary resemblance of faith, but by obedience and good works. In a word, he is not disputing concerning the method of justification, but requiring of the faithful a righteousness manifested in good works. And as Paul contends for justification independent of works, so James will not allow those to be accounted righteous, who are destitute of good works. The consideration of this object will extricate us from every difficulty. For the principal mistake of our adversaries consists in supposing, that James describes the method of justification,

(o) James ii. 21—23. Gen. xv. 6.

while he only endeavours to destroy the corrupt security of those who make vain pretences to faith, in order to excuse their contempt of good works. Into whatever forms, therefore, they pervert the words of James, they will extort nothing but these two truths: that a vain notion of faith cannot justify; and that the faithful, not content with such an imagination, manifest their righteousness by their good works.

XIII. Nor can they derive the least support from a similar passage which they cite from Paul, that "Not the hearers of the law, but the doers of the law shall be justified." (*p*) I have no wish to evade it by the explanation of Ambrose, that this is spoken, because faith in Christ is the fulfilling of the law. For this I conceive to be a mere subterfuge, which is totally unnecessary. The apostle in that place is demolishing the foolish confidence of the Jews, who boasted of possessing the exclusive knowledge of the law, whilst at the same time they were the greatest despisers of it. To prevent such great self-complacence on account of a mere acquaintance with the law, he admonishes them, that if righteousness be sought by the law, it is requisite not only to know but to observe it. We certainly do not question that the righteousness of the law consists in works, nor that this righteousness consists in the worthiness and merit of works. But still it cannot be proved that we are justified by works, unless some person be produced who has fulfilled the law. That Paul had no other meaning, is sufficiently evident from the context. After having condemned the Gentiles and Jews indiscriminately for unrighteousness, he proceeds particularly to inform us, that "as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law;" which refers to the Gentiles; and that "as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;" which belongs to the Jews. Moreover, because they shut their eyes against their transgressions, and gloried in their mere possession of the law; he adds, what is exceedingly applicable, that the law was not given that men might be justified merely by hearing its voice, but by obeying it; as though he had said, Do you seek righteousness by the law? Plead not your having heard it, which of itself is a very

small advantage, but produce works as an evidence that the law has not been given to you in vain. Since in this respect they were all deficient, they were consequently deprived of their glorying in the law. The meaning of Paul, therefore, rather furnishes an opposite argument; Legal righteousness consists in perfect works; no man can boast of having satisfied the law by his works; therefore there is no righteousness by the law.

XIV. Our adversaries proceed to adduce those passages in which the faithful boldly offer their righteousness to the examination of Divine justice, and desire to be judged according to it. Such are the following; "Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me." (*q*) Again; "Hear the right, O Lord. Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing." (*r*) Again, "I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands." (*s*) Again, "Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in mine integrity. I have not sat with vain persons; neither will I go in with dissemblers. Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: in whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity." (*t*) I have already spoken of the confidence which the saints appear to derive from their works. The passages now adduced will form no objection to our doctrine, when they are explained according to the occasion of them. Now this is twofold. For the faithful who have expressed themselves in this manner, have no wish to submit to a general examination, to be condemned or absolved according to the whole tenour of their lives, but they bring forward a particular cause to be judged; and they attribute righteousness to themselves, not with reference to the Divine perfection, but in comparison with men of impious and abandoned characters. In the first place, in order to a man's being justified, it is requisite that he should

(*q*) Psalm vii. 8.

(*s*) Psalm xviii. 21, 23, 24.

(*r*) Psalm xvii. 1, 3.

(*t*) Psalm xxvi. 1, 4, 9—11

have, not only a good cause in some particular instance, but a perpetual consistency of righteousness through life. But the saints, when they implore the judgment of God in approbation of their innocence, do not present themselves as free from every charge, and absolutely guiltless; but having fixed their dependence on his goodness alone, and confiding in his readiness to avenge the poor who are unlawfully and unjustly afflicted, they supplicate his regard to the cause in which the innocent are oppressed. But when they place themselves and their adversaries before the Divine tribunal, they boast not an innocence, which, on a severe examination, would be found correspondent to the purity of God; but knowing that their sincerity, justice, simplicity, and purity, are pleasing and acceptable to God, in comparison with the malice, wickedness, fraud, and iniquity of their enemies, they are not afraid to invoke him to judge between them. Thus, when David said to Saul, "The Lord render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness," (v) he did not mean that the Lord should examine every individual by himself, and reward him according to his merits; but he called the Lord to witness the greatness of his innocence in comparison with the iniquity of Saul. Nor did Paul, when he gloried in having "the testimony of" his "conscience" that he had conducted himself in the Church "with simplicity and godly sincerity," (w) intend to rely on this before God; but the calumnies of the impious constrained him to oppose all their slanderous aspersions by asserting his fidelity and probity, which he knew to be acceptable to the Divine goodness. For we know what he says in another place; "I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified." (x) Because, indeed, he was certain, that the judgment of God far transcended the narrow comprehension of man. However, therefore, the pious may vindicate their innocence against the hypocrisy of the impious, by invoking God to be their witness and judge; yet in their concerns with God alone, they all with one voice exclaim, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (y) Again; "Enter not into judgment with thy servant,

(v) 1 Sam. xxvi. 23.

(x) 1 Cor. iv. 4.

(w) 2 Cor. i. 12.

(y) Psalm cxxx. 3.

for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” (z) And, diffident of their own works, they gladly sing, “ Thy loving-kindness is better than life.” (a)

XV. There are likewise other places, similar to the preceding, on which some person may yet insist. Solomon says, “ The just man walketh in his integrity.” (b) Again, “ In the way of righteousness there is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death.” (c) Thus also Ezekiel declares, that he who “ doth that which is lawful and right, shall surely live.” (d) We neither deny nor obscure any of these. But let one of the sons of Adam produce such an integrity. If no one can, they must either perish from the presence of God, or flee to the asylum of mercy. Nor do we deny, that to the faithful their integrity, however imperfect, is a step toward immortality. But what is the cause of this, unless it be that when the Lord hath admitted any persons into the covenant of his grace, he does not scrutinize their works according to their intrinsic merit, but embraces them with paternal benignity? By this we mean, not merely what is taught by the Schoolmen, “ that works receive their value from the grace which accepts them;” for they suppose, that works, otherwise inadequate to the attainment of salvation by the legal covenant, are rendered sufficient for this by the Divine acceptance of them. But I assert, that they are so defiled, both by other transgressions and by their own blemishes, that they are of no value at all, except as the Lord pardons both; and this is no other than bestowing on a man gratuitous righteousness. It is irrelevant to this subject, to allege those prayers of the apostle, in which he desires such perfection for the faithful, that they may be unblameable and irreprovable in the day of Christ. (e) These passages, indeed, the Celestines formerly perverted, in order to prove a perfection of righteousness in the present life. We think it sufficient briefly to reply, with Augustine, “ that all the pious ought indeed to aspire to this object, to appear one day immaculate and guiltless before the presence of God; but since the highest excellency in this life is nothing more than a progress towards perfection, we shall never

(z) Psalm cxliii. 2. (a) Psalm lxiii. 3. (b) Prov. xx. 7. (c) Prov. xii. 28. (d) Ez. xxxiii. 14, 15. (e) 1 Thess. iii. 13. et alibi.

attain it, till being divested at once of mortality and sin, we shall fully adhere to the Lord." Nevertheless, I shall not pertinaciously contend with any person who chooses to attribute to the saints the character of perfection; provided he also defines it in the words of Augustine himself: who says, "When we denominate the virtue of the saints perfect, to this perfection itself belongs the acknowledgment of imperfection, both in truth and in humility."



CHAPTER XVIII.

Justification by Works not to be inferred from the Promise of a Reward.

LET us now proceed to those passages which affirm, that "God will render to every man according to his deeds:" (*f*) that "every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (*g*) "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul that doeth evil; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good." (*h*) And, "All shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." (*i*) "Come, ye blessed of my Father, for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink," &c. (*k*) And with these let us also connect those which represent eternal life as the reward of works, such as the following; "The recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him." (*l*) "He that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded." (*m*) "Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven." (*n*) "Every one shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour." (*o*) The declarations, that God will render to every one according to his works,

(*f*) Rom. ii. 6. Matt. xvi. 27. (*g*) 2 Cor. v. 10. (*h*) Rom. ii. 9, 10.

(*i*) John v. 29.

(*k*) Matt. xxv. 34—36.

(*l*) Prov. xii. 14.

(*m*) Prov. xiii. 13.

(*n*) Matt. v. 12. Luke vi. 35.

(*o*) 1 Cor. iii. 8.

are easily explained. For that phrase indicates the order of events; rather than the cause of them. But it is beyond all doubt, that the Lord proceeds to the consummation of our salvation by these several gradations of mercy: "Whom he hath predestinated, them he calls; whom he hath called, he justifies; and whom he hath justified, he finally glorifies." (*p*) Though he receives his children into eternal life therefore of his mere mercy; yet since he conducts them to the possession of it through a course of good works, that he may fulfil his work in them in the order he hath appointed; we need not wonder if they are said to be rewarded according to their works, by which they are undoubtedly prepared to receive the crown of immortality. And for this reason, they are properly said to "work out their own salvation," (*q*) while devoting themselves to good works they aspire to eternal life: just as in another place they are commanded to "labour for the meat which perisheth not," when they obtain eternal life by believing in Christ; and yet it is immediately added, "which the Son of man shall give unto you." (*r*) Whence it appears that the word *work* is not opposed to grace, but refers to human endeavours; and therefore it does not follow, either that the faithful are the authors of their own salvation, or that salvation proceeds from their works. But as soon as they are introduced, by the knowledge of the gospel and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, into communion with Christ, eternal life is begun in them. Now "the good work which" God "hath begun in" them, "he will perform until the day of Jesus Christ." (*s*) And it is performed, when they prove themselves to be the genuine children of God by their resemblance to their heavenly Father in righteousness and holiness.

II. We have no reason to infer from the term *reward*, that good works are the cause of salvation. First, let this truth be established in our minds, that the kingdom of heaven is not the stipend of servants, but the inheritance of children, which will be enjoyed only by those whom the Lord adopts as his children, and for no other cause than on account of this adoption. "For the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the

(*p*) Rom. viii. 30. (*q*) Phil. ii. 12. (*r*) John vi. 27. (*s*) Phil. i. 6.

free woman." (t) And therefore, in the same passage in which the Holy Spirit promises eternal life as the reward of works, by expressly denominating it "an inheritance," he proves it to proceed from another cause. Thus Christ enumerates the works which he compensates by the reward of heaven, when he calls the elect to the possession of it; but at the same time adds, that it is to be enjoyed by right of inheritance. (v) So Paul encourages servants, who faithfully discharge their duty, to hope for a reward from the Lord; but at the same time calls it "the reward of the inheritance." (w) We see how they, almost in express terms, caution us against attributing eternal life to works, instead of ascribing it to Divine adoption. Why then, it may be asked, do they at the same time make mention of works? This question shall be elucidated by one example from the Scripture. Before the nativity of Isaac, there had been promised to Abraham a seed in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, a multiplication of his posterity, which would equal the stars of heaven and the sands of the sea, and other similar blessings. (x) Many years after, in consequence of a Divine command, Abraham prepares to sacrifice his son. After this act of obedience, he receives this promise: "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." (y) What? did Abraham by his obedience merit that blessing which had been promised him before the command was delivered? Here then it appears beyond all doubt, that the Lord rewards the works of the faithful with those blessings which he had already given them before their works were thought of, and while he had no reason for his beneficence, but his own mercy.

III. Nor does the Lord deceive or trifle with us, when he says that he will requite works with what he had freely given

(t) Gal. iv. 30.

(v) Matt. xxv. 34.

(w) Col. iii. 24.

(x) Gen. xii. 2, 3. xiii. 16. xv. 5.

(y) Gen. xxii. 16—18.

previously to the performance of them. For since it is his pleasure that we should be employed in good works, while aspiring after the manifestation or enjoyment of those things which he hath promised, and that they constitute the road in which we should travel to endeavour to attain the blessed hope proposed to us in heaven, therefore the fruit of the promises, to the perfection of which those works conduct us, is justly assigned to them. The apostle elegantly expressed both those ideas, when he said that the Colossians applied themselves to the duties of charity, "for the hope which was laid up for them in heaven, whereof they heard before in the word, of the truth of the gospel." (z) For his assertion, that they knew from the gospel, that there was hope laid up for them in heaven, is equivalent to a declaration that it depended not on any works, but on Christ alone: which perfectly accords with the observation of Peter, that the faithful "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." (a) When it is said that they must labour for it, it implies, that in order to attain to it, the faithful have a race to run, which terminates only with their lives. But that we might not suppose the reward promised us by the Lord to be regulated according to the proportion of merit, he proposes a parable, in which he has represented himself under the character of a householder, who employs all the persons he meets in the cultivation of his vineyard; some he hires at the first hour of the day, others at the second, others at the third, and some even at the eleventh hour; in the evening he pays them all the same wages. (b) A brief and just explanation of this parable is given by the ancient writer, whoever he was, of the treatise "On the calling of the Gentiles," which bears the name of Ambrose. I shall adopt his words in preference to my own. "By the example of this comparison (says he) the Lord hath shewn a variety of manifold vocation pertaining to the same grace. They who, having been admitted into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, are placed on an equality with them who had laboured the whole day, represent the state of those whom, 'to magnify the excellence of grace, God in his mercy hath re-

(z) Col. i. 4, 5.

(a) 1 Peter i. 5.

(b) Matt. xx. 1, &c.

warded in the decline of the day, and at the conclusion of life: not paying them the wages due to their labour, but sending down the riches of his goodness in copious effusions, on them whom he hath chosen without works; that even they who have laboured the most, and have received no more than the last, may understand theirs to be a reward of grace, not of works." Lastly, it is also worthy of being observed, that in those places where eternal life is called a reward of works, it is not to be understood simply of that communion which we have with God, as the prelude to a happy immortality, when he embraces us in Christ with paternal benevolence; but of the possession or fruition of ultimate blessedness, as the very words of Christ import; "in the world to come, eternal life." (c) And in another place, "Come, inherit the kingdom," &c. (d) For the same reason, Paul applies the term *adoption* to the revelation of adoption, which shall be made in the resurrection; and afterwards explains it to be "the redemption of our body." (e) Otherwise, as alienation from God is eternal death, so when a man is received into the favour of God so as to enjoy communion with him and become united to him, he is translated from death to life; which is solely the fruit of adoption. And if they insist with their accustomed pertinacity on the reward of works, we may retort against them that passage of Peter, where eternal life is called "the end (or reward) of faith." (f)

IV. Let us not therefore imagine, that the Holy Spirit by these promises commends the worthiness of our works, as though they merited such a reward. For the Scripture leaves us nothing that can exalt us in the Divine presence. Its whole tendency is rather to repress our arrogance, and to inspire us with humility, dejection, and contrition. But such promises assist our weakness, which otherwise would immediately slide and fall, if it did not sustain itself by this exhortation, and alleviate its sorrows by this consolation. First, let every one reflect, how difficult it is for a man to relinquish and renounce, not only all that belongs to him, but even himself. And yet this is the first lesson which Christ teaches his disciples, that is to say, all the faithful. Afterwards he gives

(c) Mark x. 30. (d) Matt. xxv. 34. (e) Rom. viii. 23. (f) 1 Peter i. 9.

them such tuition during the remainder of their lives, under the discipline of the cross, that their hearts may not fix either their desires or their dependence on present advantages. In short, he generally manages them in such a manner, that whithersoever they turn their views throughout the world, nothing but despair presents itself to them on every side; so that Paul says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are all of men most miserable." (*g*) To preserve them from sinking under these afflictions, they have the presence of the Lord, who encourages them to raise their heads higher, and to extend their views farther, by assurances that they will find in him that blessedness, which they cannot see in the world. This blessedness he calls *a reward, a recompence*; not attributing any merit to their works, but signifying that it is a compensation for their oppressions, sufferings, and disgrace. Wherefore there is no objection against our following the example of the Scripture in calling eternal life *a reward*; since in that state the Lord receives his people from affliction into prosperity and happiness; from sorrow into joy; from poverty into affluence; from ignominy into glory; and commutes all the evils which they have endured for blessings of superior magnitude. So likewise it will occasion no inconvenience, if we consider holiness of life as the way, not which procures our admission into the glory of the heavenly kingdom, but through which the elect are conducted by their God to the manifestation of it: since it is his good pleasure, to glorify them whom he hath sanctified. Only let us not imagine a reciprocal relation of merit and reward, which is the error into which the sophists fell, for want of considering the end which we have stated. But how preposterous is it, when the Lord calls our attention to one end, for us to direct our views to another! Nothing is clearer, than that the promise of a reward to good works is designed to afford some consolation to the weakness of our flesh, but not to inflate our minds with vain-glory. Whoever therefore infers from this, that there is any merit in works, or balances the work against the reward, errs very widely from the true design of God.

V. Therefore, when the Scripture says, that "the Lord, the

righteous judge, shall give" to his people "a crown of righteousness;" (h) I not only reply with Augustine, "To whom could the righteous Judge have given a crown, if the Father of mercies had never given grace? and how would it have been an act of righteousness, if not preceded by that grace which justifies the ungodly? How could these rewards be rendered, unless those unmerited blessings were previously bestowed?" But I further inquire; How could he impute righteousness to our works, unless his indulgent mercy had concealed their unrighteousness? How could he esteem them worthy of a reward, unless his infinite goodness had abolished all their demerit of punishment? Augustine is in the habit of designating eternal life by the word *grace*, because when it is given as the reward of works, it is conferred on the gratuitous gifts of God. But the Scripture humbles us more, and at the same time exalts us. For beside prohibiting us to glory in works, because they are the gratuitous gifts of God, it likewise teaches us that they are always defiled by some pollutions; so that they cannot satisfy God, if examined according to the rule of his judgment; but it is also added, to prevent our despondency, that they please him merely through his mercy. Now though Augustine expresses himself somewhat differently from us, yet that there is no real difference of sentiment will appear from his language to Boniface. After a comparison between two men, the one of a life holy and perfect even to a miracle, the other a man of probity and integrity, yet not so perfect but that many defects might be discovered, he at length makes this inference; "The latter, whose character appears inferior to the former, on account of the true faith in God by which he lives, and according to which he accuses himself in all his delinquencies, and in all his good works praises God, ascribing the glory to him, the ignominy to himself, and deriving from him both the pardon of his sins and the love of virtue; this man, I say, when delivered from this life, removes into the presence of Christ. Wherefore, but on account of faith? by which, though no man be saved without works (for it is not a reprobate faith but such

(h) 2 Tim. iv. 8.

as works by love) yet it produces remission of sins, for the just lives by faith; (*i*) but without it, works apparently good are perverted into sins." Here he avows without any obscurity that for which we so strenuously contend, that the righteousness of good works depends on their acceptance by the Divine mercy.

VI. Very similar with the foregoing passages is the import of the following: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." (*k*) "Charge them that are rich in this word, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God; that they do good, that they be rich in good works; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (*l*) Here good works are compared to riches, which we may enjoy in the happiness of eternal life. I reply, that we shall never arrive at the true meaning of these passages, unless we advert to the design of the Spirit in such language. If Christ's declaration be true, that "where our treasure is, there will our heart be also;" (*m*) as the children of this world are generally intent on the acquisition of those things which conduce to the comfort of the present life; so it ought to be the concern of the faithful, after they have been taught that this life will ere long vanish like a dream, to transmit those things which they really wish to enjoy, to that place where they shall possess a perfect and permanent life. It behoves us, therefore, to imitate the conduct of those who determine to migrate to any new situation, where they have chosen to reside during the remainder of their lives: they send their property before them, without regarding the inconvenience of a temporary absence from it; esteeming their happiness the greater in proportion to the wealth which they possess in the place which they intend for their permanent residence. If we believe heaven to be our country, it is better for us to transmit our wealth thither, than to retain it here, where we may lose it by a sudden removal. But how shall we transmit it? Why, if we com-

(*i*) Heb. x. 38.(*l*) 1 Tim. vi. 17—19.(*k*) Luke xvi. 9.(*m*) Matt. vi. 21.

municate to the necessities of the poor; whatever is bestowed on them, the Lord considers as given to himself. (*n*) Whence that celebrated promise; "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord." (*o*) Again, "He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." (*p*) For all things that are bestowed on our brethren in a way of charity, are so many deposits in the hand of the Lord; which he, as a faithful depository, will one day restore with ample interest. Are our acts of duty then, it will be asked, so valuable in the sight of God, that they are like riches reserved in his hand for us? And who can be afraid to assert this, when the Scripture so frequently and plainly declares it? But if any one from the mere goodness of God would infer the merit of works, these testimonies will afford no countenance to such an error. For we can infer nothing from them except the indulgence which God in his mercy is disposed to shew us, since in order to animate us to rectitude of conduct, though the duties we perform are unworthy of the least notice from him, yet he suffers not one of them to go unrewarded.

VII. But they insist more on the words of the apostle, who, to console the Thessalonians under their tribulations, tells them that the design of their infliction is, "that they may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which they also suffer. Seeing," says he, "it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven." (*q*) And the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name in that ye have ministered to the saints." (*r*) To the first passage I reply, That it indicates no worthiness of merit; but since it is the will of God the Father, that those whom he hath chosen as his children be conformed to Christ his first-begotten Son; (*s*) as it was necessary for him first to suffer and then to enter into the glory destined for him; (*t*) so "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." (*u*) The tribulations.

(*n*) Matt. xxv. 40.(*o*) Prov. xix. 17.(*p*) 2 Cor. ix. 6.(*q*) 2 Thess. i. 5—7.(*r*) Heb. vi. 10.(*s*) Rom. viii. 29.(*t*) Luke xxiv. 26.(*u*) Acts xiv. 22.

therefore, which we suffer for the name of Christ, are as it were certain marks impressed on us by which God usually distinguishes the sheep of his flock. For this reason, then, we are accounted worthy of the kingdom of God, because we bear in our body the marks of our Lord and Master, (*w*) which are the badges of the children of God. The same sentiment is conveyed in the following passages: "Bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." (*x*) "Being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." (*y*) The reason which the apostle subjoins tends not to establish any merit, but to confirm the hope of the kingdom of God; as though he had said, As it is consistent with the judgment of God to avenge on your enemies those vexations with which they have harassed you, so it is also to grant you respite and repose from those vexations. Of the other passage, which represents it as becoming the righteousness of God not to forget our services, so as almost to imply that he would be unrighteous if he did forget them, the meaning is, that in order to arouse our indolence, God hath assured us that the labour which we undergo for the glory of of his name shall not be in vain. And we should always remember that this promise, as well as all others, would be fraught with no benefit to us, unless it were preceded by the gratuitous covenant of mercy, on which the whole certainty of our salvation must depend. But relying on that covenant, we may securely confide, that our services, however unworthy, will not go without a reward from the goodness of God. To confirm us in that expectation, the apostle asserts that God is not unrighteous, but will perform the promise he hath once made. This righteousness, therefore, refers rather to the truth of the Divine promise, than to the equity of rendering to us any thing that is our due. To this purpose there is a remarkable observation of Augustine, which as that holy man has not hesitated frequently to repeat as deserving of remembrance, so I deem it not unworthy of a constant place in our minds: "The Lord," says he,

(*w*) Gal. vi. 17.(*x*) 2 Cor. iv. 10.(*y*) Phil. iii. 10, 11.

“is faithful, who hath made himself our debtor, not by receiving any thing from us, but by promising all things to us.”

VIII. Our Pharisees adduce the following passages of Paul: “Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.” Again; “Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” (z) Again; “Above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” (a) From the first two passages they contend that we are justified rather by charity than by faith; that is, by the superior virtue, as they express it. But this argument is easily overturned. For we have already shewn, that what is mentioned in the first passage, has no reference to true faith. The second we explain to signify true faith, than which he calls charity greater, not as being more meritorious, but because it is more fruitful, more extensive, more generally serviceable, and perpetual in its duration; whereas the use of faith is only temporary. In respect of excellence, the pre-eminence must be given to the love of God, which is not in this place the subject of Paul’s discourse. For the only point which he urges, is, that with reciprocal charity we mutually edify one another in the Lord. But let us suppose that charity excels faith in all respects, yet what person, possessed of sound judgment, or even of the common exercise of reason, would argue from this that it has a greater concern in justification? The power of justifying, attached to faith, consists not in the worthiness of the act. Our justification depends solely on the mercy of God and the merit of Christ, which when faith apprehends, it is said to justify us. Now if we ask our adversaries, in what sense they attribute justification to charity; they will reply, that because it is a duty pleasing to God, the merit of it, being accepted by the Divine goodness, is imputed to us for righteousness. Here we see how curiously their argument proceeds. We assert that faith justifies, not by procuring us a righteousness through its own merit, but as the instrument by which we freely obtain the righteousness of Christ. These men, passing over in silence the mercy of God, and making no mention of Christ, in whom is the substance of righteousness, con-

(z) 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 13.

(a) Col. iii. 14.

tend that we are justified by the virtue of charity, because it is more excellent than faith: just as though any one should insist that a king, in consequence of his superior rank, is more expert at making a shoe than a shoemaker. This one argument affords an ample proof that all the Sorbonic schools are destitute of the least experience of justification by faith. But if any wrangler should yet inquire, why we understand Paul to use the word *faith* in different acceptations in the same discourse, I am prepared with a substantial reason for such an interpretation. For since those gifts which Paul enumerates, are in some respect connected with faith and hope, because they relate to the knowledge of God, he summarily comprises them all under those two words: as though he had said, The end of prophecy, and of tongues, and of the grace and science of interpretation, is to conduct us to the knowledge of God. But we know God in this life only by hope and faith. Therefore when I mention faith and hope, I comprehend all these things under them. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three;" that is, all gifts, whatever may be their variety, are referred to these. "But the greatest of these is charity." From the third passage they infer, that if "charity is the bond of perfectness," it is therefore the bond of righteousness, which is no other than perfection. Now to refrain from observing that what Paul calls *perfectness*, is the mutual connection which subsists between the members of a well constituted church, and to admit that charity constitutes our perfection before God; yet what new advantage will they gain? On the contrary, I shall always object, that we never arrive at that perfection, unless we fulfil all the branches of charity; and hence I shall infer, that since all men are at an immense distance from complete charity, they are destitute of all hope of perfection.

IX. I have no inclination to notice all the passages of Scripture, which the folly of the modern Sorbonists seize as they occur, and without any reason employ against us. For some of them are so truly ridiculous, that I could not even mention them, unless I wished to be accounted a fool. I shall therefore conclude this subject after having explained a sentence uttered by Christ, with which they are wonderfully pleased. To a lawyer, who asked him what was necessary to salvation, he replied;

“If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” (*b*) What can we wish more, say they, when the Author of grace himself commands to obtain the kingdom of heaven by an observance of the commandments? As though it were not evident, that Christ adapted his replies to those with whom he conversed. Here a doctor of the law inquires the method of obtaining happiness, and that not simply, but what men must *do* in order to attain it. Both the character of the speaker and the inquiry itself induced the Lord to make this reply. The inquirer, persuaded of the righteousness of the law, possessed a blind confidence in his works. Besides, he only inquired what were those works of righteousness by which salvation might be procured. He is therefore justly referred to the law, which contains a perfect mirror of righteousness. We also explicitly declare, that if life be sought by works, it is indispensably requisite to keep the commandments. And this doctrine is necessary to be known by Christians; for how should they flee for refuge to Christ, if they did not acknowledge themselves to have fallen from the way of life upon the precipice of death. And how could they know how far they have wandered from the way of life, without a previous knowledge of what that way of life is? It is then, therefore, that Christ is presented to them as the asylum of salvation, when they perceive the vast difference between their own lives and the Divine righteousness, which consists in the observance of the law. The sum of the whole is, that if we seek salvation by works, we must keep the commandments, by which we are taught perfect righteousness. But to stop here, would be failing in the midst of our course; for to keep the commandments is a task to which none of us are equal. Being excluded then from the righteousness of the law, we are under the necessity of resorting to some other refuge, namely, to faith in Christ. Wherefore as the Lord, knowing this doctor of the law to be inflated with a vain confidence in his works, recalls his attention to the law, that it may teach him his own character as a sinner, obnoxious to the tremendous sentence of eternal death; so in another place, addressing those who have already been humbled under this knowledge, he

omits all mention of the law, and consoles them with a promise of grace; "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (c)

X. At length, after our adversaries have wearied themselves with perversions of Scripture, they betake themselves to subtleties and sophisms. They cavil, that faith is in some places called a work, (d) and hence they infer that we improperly oppose faith to works. As though faith procured righteousness for us by its intrinsic merit, as an act of obedience to the Divine will, and not rather because, by embracing the Divine mercy, it seals to our hearts the righteousness of Christ, which that mercy offers to us in the preaching of the gospel. The reader will pardon me for not dwelling on the confutation of such follies; for they require nothing to refute them but their own weakness. But I wish briefly to answer one objection, which has some appearance of reason, to prevent its being the source of any difficulty to persons who have had but little experience. Since common sense dictates that opposites are subject to similar rules, and as all sins are imputed to us for unrighteousness, they maintain it to be reasonable, on the other hand, that all good works should be imputed to us for righteousness. Those who reply, that the condemnation of men proceeds from unbelief alone, and not from particular sins, do not satisfy me. I agree with them, that incredulity is the fountain and root of all evils. For it is the original defection from God, which is afterwards followed by particular transgressions of the law. But as they appear to fix one and the same rule for good and evil works in forming a judgment of righteousness or unrighteousness, here I am obliged to dissent from them. For the righteousness of works is the perfect obedience of the law. We cannot therefore be righteous by works, unless we follow this straight line throughout the whole of our lives. The first deviation from it is a lapse into unrighteousness. Hence it appears that righteousness arises not from one or a few works, but from an inflexible and indefatigable observance of the Divine will. But the rule of judging of unrighteousness is

(c) Matt. xi. 28, 29.

(d) John vi. 29.

very different. For he who has committed fornication or theft, is for one transgression liable to the sentence of death, because he has offended against the Divine majesty. These disputants of ours, therefore, fall into an error for want of adverting to the decision of James, that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill," &c. (c) It ought not, therefore, to be deemed absurd when we say, that death is the reward justly due to every sin, because they are all and every one deserving of the indignation and vengeance of God. But it will be a weak argument to infer, on the contrary, that one good work will reconcile a man to God, whose wrath he hath incurred by a multitude of sins.



CHAPTER XIX.

On Christian Liberty.

WE have now to treat of Christian liberty, an explanation of which ought not to be omitted in a treatise which is designed to comprehend a compendious summary of evangelical doctrine. For it is a subject of the first importance, and unless it be well understood, our consciences scarcely venture to undertake any thing without doubting, experience in many things hesitation and reluctance, and are always subject to fluctuations and fears. But especially it is an appendix to justification, and affords no small assistance towards the knowledge of its influence. Hence they who sincerely fear God will experience the incomparable advantage of that doctrine, which impious scoffers pursue with their railleries; because in the spiritual intoxication with which they are seized, they allow themselves the most unbounded impudence. Wherefore this is the proper time to introduce the subject; and though we have slightly touched upon it on some former occasions, yet it was useful to defer

(c) James ii. 10, 11.

the full discussion of it to this place; because as soon as any mention is made of Christian liberty, then either inordinate passions rage, or violent emotions arise, unless timely opposition be made to those wanton spirits, who most nefariously corrupt things which are otherwise the best. For some, under the pretext of this liberty, cast off all obedience to God, and precipitate themselves into the most unbridled licentiousness; and some despise it, supposing it to be subversive of all moderation, order, and moral distinctions. What can we do in this case, surrounded by such difficulties? Shall we entirely discard Christian liberty, and so preclude the occasion of such dangers? But, as we have observed, unless this be understood, there can be no right knowledge of Christ, or of evangelical truth, or of internal peace of mind. We should rather exert ourselves to prevent the suppression of such a necessary branch of doctrine, and at the same time to obviate those absurd objections which are frequently deduced from it.

II. Christian liberty, according to my judgment, consists of three parts. The first part is, that the consciences of the faithful, when seeking an assurance of their justification before God, should raise themselves above the law, and forget all the righteousness of the law. For since the law, as we have elsewhere demonstrated, leaves no man righteous, either we must be excluded from all hope of justification, or it is necessary for us to be delivered from it, and that so completely as not to have any dependence on works. For he who imagines, that in order to obtain righteousness he must produce any works however small, can fix no limit or boundary, but renders himself a debtor to the whole law. Avoiding, therefore, all mention of the law, and dismissing all thought of our own works, in reference to justification, we must embrace the Divine mercy alone, and turning our eyes from ourselves, fix them solely on Christ. For the question is, not how we can be righteous, but how, though unrighteous and unworthy, we can be considered as righteous. And the conscience that desires to attain any certainty respecting this, must give no admission to the law. Nor will this authorise any one to conclude, that the law is of no use to the faithful, whom it still continues to instruct and exhort, and stimulate to duty, although it has no place in their

consciences before the tribunal of God. For these two things being very different, require to be properly and carefully distinguished by us. The whole life of Christians ought to be an exercise of piety, since they are called to sanctification. (*f*) It is the office of the law to remind them of their duty, and thereby to excite them to the pursuit of holiness and integrity. But when their consciences are solicitous how God may be propitiated, what answer they shall make, and on what they shall rest their confidence, if called to his tribunal; there must then be no consideration of the requisitions of the law, but Christ alone must be proposed for righteousness, who exceeds all the perfection of the law.

III. On this point turns almost the whole argument of the Epistle to the Galatians. For that they are erroneous expositors, who maintain, that Paul there contends only for liberty from ceremonies, may be proved from the topics of his reasoning. Such as these: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (*g*) Again; "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. Every man that is circumcised is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." (*h*) These passages certainly comprehend something more exalted than a freedom from ceremonies. I confess, indeed, that Paul is there treating of ceremonies, because he is contending with the false apostles, who attempted to introduce again into the Christian Church the ancient shadows of the law, which had been abolished by the advent of Christ. But for the decision of this question it was necessary to discuss some higher topics, in which the whole controversy lay. First, because the brightness of the gospel was obscured by those Jewish shadows, he shews that in Christ we have a complete exhibition of all those things which were adumbrated by the ceremonies of Moses. Secondly, because these imposters instilled into the people the very pernicious opinion, that this ceremonial

(*f*) Ephes. i. 4. 1 Thess. iv. 3, 7. (*g*) Gal. iii. 13. (*h*) Gal. v. 1—4.

obedience was sufficient to merit the Divine favour; he principally contends, that the faithful ought not to suppose that they can obtain righteousness before God by any works of the law, much less by those inferior elements. And he at the same time teaches, that from the condemnation of the law, which otherwise impends over all men, they are delivered by the cross of Christ, that they may rely with perfect security on him alone: a topic which properly belongs to our present subject. Lastly, he asserts the liberty of the consciences of the faithful, which ought to be laid under no obligation in things that are not necessary.

IV. The second part of Christian liberty, which is dependent on the first, is, that their consciences do not observe the law, as being under any legal obligation; but that, being liberated from the yoke of the law, they yield a voluntary obedience to the will of God. For being possessed with perpetual terrors, as long as they remain under the dominion of the law, they will never engage with alacrity and promptitude in the service of God, unless they have previously received this liberty. We shall more easily and clearly discover the design of these things from an example. The precept of the law is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (i) That this command may be fulfilled, our soul must be previously divested of every other perception and thought, our heart must be freed from all desires, and our might must be collected and contracted to this one point. Those who, compared with others, have made a very considerable progress in the way of the Lord, are yet at an immense distance from this perfection. For though they love God with their soul, and with sincere affection of heart, yet they have still a part of their heart and soul occupied by carnal desires, which retard their progress towards God. They do indeed press forward with strong exertions, but the flesh partly debilitates their strength and partly attracts it to itself. What can they do in this case, when they perceive that they are so far from observing the law? They wish, they aspire, they endeavour, but they do nothing with the perfection that is required. If they advert

(i) Deut. vi. 5.

to the law, they see that every work they attempt or meditate, is accursed. Nor is there the least reason for any person to deceive himself, by concluding that an action is not necessarily altogether evil because it is imperfect, and that therefore the good part of it is accepted by God. For the law, requiring perfect love, condemns all imperfection, unless its rigour be mitigated. Let him consider his work, therefore, which he wished to be thought partly good, and he will find that very work to be a transgression of the law, because it is imperfect.

V. See how all our works, if estimated according to the rigour of the law, are subject to its curse. How, then, could unhappy souls apply themselves with alacrity to any work for which they could expect to receive nothing but a curse? On the contrary, if they are liberated from the severe exaction of the law, or rather from the whole of its rigour, and hear God calling them with paternal gentleness, then with cheerfulness and prompt alacrity they will answer to his call and follow his guidance. In short, they who are bound by the yoke of the law, are like slaves who have certain daily tasks appointed by their masters. They think they have done nothing, and presume not to enter into the presence of their masters without having finished the work prescribed to them. But children, who are treated by their parents in a more liberal manner, hesitate not to present to them their imperfect, and in some respects faulty works, in confidence that their obedience and promptitude of mind will be accepted by them, though they have not performed all that they wished. Such children ought we to be, feeling a certain confidence that our services, however small, rude, and imperfect, will be approved by our most indulgent Father. This he also confirms to us by the prophet; "I will spare them," saith he, "as a man spareth his own son that serveth him:" (k) where it is evident, from the mention of *service*, that the word *spare* is used to denote indulgence or an overlooking of faults. And we have great need of this confidence, without which all our endeavours will be vain; for God considers us as serving him in none of our works, but such as are truly done by us to his honour. But how can this be done amidst those terrors,

where it is a matter of doubt whether our works offend God or honour him?

VI. This is the reason why the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews refers to faith, and estimates only by faith, all the good works which are recorded of the holy patriarchs. (l) On this liberty there is a remarkable passage in the Epistle to the Romans, where Paul reasons that sin ought not to have dominion over us, because we are not under the law, but under grace. (m) For after he had exhorted the faithful; "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body; neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God;" (n) they might, on the contrary, object that they yet carried about with them the flesh full of inordinate desires, and that sin dwelt in them; but he adds the consolation furnished by their liberty from the law; as though he had said, Although you do not yet experience sin to be destroyed, and righteousness living in you in perfection, yet you have no cause for terror and dejection of mind, as if God were perpetually offended on account of your remaining sin; because by grace you are emancipated from the law, that your works may be not judged according to that rule. But those, who infer that we may commit sin because we are not under the law, may be assured that they have no concern with this liberty, the end of which is to animate us to virtue.

VII. The third part of Christian liberty teaches us, that we are bound by no obligation before God respecting external things, which in themselves are indifferent; but that we may indifferently sometimes use, and at other times omit them. And the knowledge of this liberty also is very necessary for us; for without it we shall have no tranquillity of conscience, nor will there be any end of superstitions. Many in the present age think it a folly to raise any dispute concerning the free use of meats, of days, and of habits, and similar subjects, considering these things as frivolous and nugatory; but they are of greater importance than is generally believed. For when the conscience has once fallen into the snare, it enters a long and inextricable

(l) Heb. xi. 2.

(m) Rom. vi. 14.

(n) Rom. vi. 12, 13.

labyrinth, from which it is afterwards difficult to escape; if a man begin to doubt the lawfulness of using flax in sheets, shirts, handkerchiefs, napkins, and tablecloths, neither will he be certain respecting hemp, and at last he will doubt of the lawfulness of using oakum; for he will consider with himself whether he cannot eat without tablecloths, whether he cannot do without handkerchiefs or napkins. If any one imagine delicate food to be unlawful, he will ere long have no tranquillity before God in eating brown bread and common viands, while he remembers that he might support his body with meat of a quality still inferior. If he hesitate respecting good wine, he will afterwards be unable with any peace of conscience to drink the most vapid; and at last he will not presume even to touch pure and wholesome water. In short, he will come to think it criminal to step over a twig that lies across his path. For this is the commencement of no trivial controversy; but the dispute is whether the use of certain things be agreeable to God, whose will ought to guide all our resolutions and all our actions. The necessary consequence is, that some are hurried by despair into a vortex of confusion, from which they see no way of escape; and some, despising God, and casting off all fear of him, make a way of ruin for themselves. For all, who are involved in such doubts, which way soever they turn their views, behold something offensive to their consciences presenting itself on every side.

VIII. "I know," says Paul, "that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean." (o) In these words he makes all external things subject to our liberty, provided that our minds have regard to this liberty before God. But if any superstitious notion cause us to scruple, those things which were naturally pure become contaminated to us. Wherefore he subjoins, "Happy is he, that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." (p) In these perplexities are not they, who shew their superior boldness by the security of their presumption, guilty of departing from God? whilst they who are deeply affected with the true fear of

(o) Rom. xiv. 14.

(p) Rom. xiv. 22, 23.

God, when they are even constrained to admit many things to which their own consciences are averse, are filled with terror and consternation. No persons of this description receive any of the gifts of God with thanksgiving, by which alone Paul nevertheless declares them to be all sanctified to our use. (q) I mean a thanksgiving proceeding from a mind, which acknowledges the beneficence and goodness of God in the blessings he bestows. For many of them, indeed, apprehend the things which they use to be the gifts of God, whom they praise in his works; but not being persuaded that things are given to them, how could they give thanks to God as the giver of them? We see, in short, the tendency of this liberty, which is, that without any scruple of conscience or perturbation of mind, we should devote the gifts of God to that use for which he hath given them; by which confidence our souls may have peace with him, and acknowledge his liberality towards us. For this comprehends all ceremonies, the observation of which is left free, that the conscience may not be bound by any obligation to observe them, but may remember that by the goodness of God it may use them, or abstain from them, as shall be most conducive to edification.

IX. Now it must be carefully observed, that Christian liberty is in all its branches a spiritual thing; all the virtue of which consists in appeasing terrified consciences before God, whether they are disquieted and solicitous concerning the remission of their sins, or are anxious to know of their works, which are imperfect and contaminated by the defilements of the flesh, be acceptable to God, or are tormented concerning the use of things that are indifferent. Wherefore they are guilty of perverting its meaning, who either make it the pretext of their irregular appetites, that they may abuse the divine blessings to the purposes of sensuality, or who suppose that there is no liberty but what is used before men, and therefore in the exercise of it totally disregard their weak brethren. The former of these sins is the more common in the present age. There is scarcely any one, whom his wealth permits to be sumptuous,

who is not delighted with luxurious splendour in his entertainments, in his dress, and in his buildings; who does not desire a pre-eminence in every species of luxury; who does not strangely flatter himself on his elegance. And all these things are defended under the pretext of Christian liberty. They allege, that they are things indifferent: this I admit; provided they be indifferently used. But where they are too ardently coveted, proudly boasted, or luxuriously lavished, these things, of themselves otherwise indifferent, are completely polluted by such vices. This passage of Paul makes an excellent distinction respecting things which are indifferent; "Unto the pure, all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." (r) For why are curses denounced on rich men, who "receive their consolation," who are "satiated," who "now laugh," who "lie on beds of ivory," who "join field to field," who "have the harp, and the lyre, and the tabret, and wine in their feasts?" (s) Ivory and gold and riches of all kinds are certainly blessings of Divine Providence, not only permitted, but expressly designed for the use of men; nor are we anywhere prohibited to laugh, or to be satiated with food, or to annex new possessions to those already enjoyed by ourselves or by our ancestors, or to be delighted with musical harmony, or to drink wine. This indeed is true; but amidst an abundance of all things, to be immersed in sensual delights, to inebriate the heart and mind with present pleasures, and perpetually to grasp at new ones, these things are very remote from a legitimate use of the Divine blessings. Let them banish, therefore, immoderate cupidity, excessive profusion, vanity, and arrogance; that with a pure conscience they may make a proper use of the gifts of God. When their hearts shall be formed to this sobriety, they will have a rule for the legitimate enjoyment of them. On the contrary, without this moderation, even the common pleasures of the vulgar are chargeable with excess. For it is truly observed, that a proud heart frequently dwells under coarse and ragged garments, and that simplicity and humility are sometimes concealed under purple and fine linen. Let all men in their respect-

(r) Titus i. 15.

(s) Luke vi. 24, 25. Amos vi. 1, &c. Isaiah v. 8, &c.

ive stations, whether of poverty, of competence, or of splendour, live in the remembrance of this truth, that God confers his blessings on them for the support of life, not of luxury; and let them consider this as the law of Christian liberty, that they learn the lesson which Paul had learned, when he said; "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." (t)

X. Many persons err likewise in this respect, that, as if their liberty would not be perfectly secure unless witnessed by men, they make an indiscriminate and imprudent use of it: a disorderly practice, which occasions frequent offence to their weak brethren. There are some to be found in the present day, who imagine their liberty would be abridged, if they were not to enter on the enjoyment of it by eating animal food on Friday. Their eating is not the subject of my reprehension; but their minds require to be divested of this false notion; for they ought to consider, that they obtain no advantage from their liberty before men, but with God; and that it consists in abstinence as well as in use. If they apprehend it to be immaterial in God's view, whether they eat animal food or eggs, whether their garments be scarlet or black; it is quite sufficient. The conscience, to which the benefit of this liberty belonged, is now emancipated. Therefore, though they abstain from animal food during all the remainder of their lives, this is no diminution of their freedom. But because they are free, they therefore abstain with a free conscience. But they fall into a very pernicious error in disregarding the infirmities of their brethren, which it becomes us to bear, so as not rashly to do any thing which would give them the least offence. But it will be said, that it is sometimes right to assert our liberty before men. This I confess; yet the greatest caution and moderation must be observed, lest we cast off all concern for the weak, whom God hath so strongly recommended to our regards.

XI. I shall now therefore make some observations concerning offences; how they are to be discriminated, what are to be

(t) Phil. iv. 11, 12.

avoided, and what are to be disregarded; whence we may afterwards determine what room there is for our liberty in our intercourse with mankind. I approve of the common distinction between an offence given and an offence taken, since it is plainly countenanced by Scripture, and is likewise sufficiently significant of the thing intended to be expressed. If you do any thing at a wrong time or place, or with an unseasonable levity, or wantonness, or temerity, by which the weak and inexperienced are offended, it must be termed an offence given by you; because it arises from your fault. And an offence is always said to be given in any action, the fault of which proceeds from the performer of that action. An offence taken is, when any transaction, not otherwise unseasonable or culpable, is through malevolence, or some perverse disposition, construed into an occasion of offence. For in this instance the offence is not given, but taken without reason by such perverseness of construction. The first species of offence affects none but the weak; the second is created by moroseness of temper, and pharisaical superciliousness. Wherefore we shall denominate the former, the offence of the weak, the latter, that of Pharisees; and we shall so temper the use of our liberty, that it ought to submit to the ignorance of weak brethren, but not at all to the austerity of Pharisees. For our duty to the weak, Paul fully shews in many places. "Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye." Again; "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way," (v) and much more to the same import, which were better examined in its proper connection than recited here. The sum of all is, that "we then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification." (u) In another place; "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak." (w) Again; "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat: asking no questions for conscience sake: conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the others." In short, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the

(v) Rom. xiv. 1, 13.

(u) Rom. xv. 1, 2.

(w) 1 Cor. viii. 9.

Gentiles, nor to the Church of God.” (x) In another place also; “Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” (y) The meaning of this is, that our liberty is not given us to be used in opposition to our weak neighbours, to whom charity obliges us to do every possible service; but rather in order that, having peace with God in our minds, we may also live peaceably among men. But how much attention should be paid to an offence taken by Pharisees, we learn from our Lord’s injunction; “Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind.” (z) The disciples had informed him, that the Pharisees were offended with his discourse. He replies, that they are to be disregarded, and their offence treated with contempt.

XII. But the subject is still pending in uncertainty, unless we know, whom we are to account weak, and whom we are to consider as Pharisees: without which distinction, I see no use of liberty in the midst of offences, but such as must be attended with the greatest danger. But Paul appears to me to have very clearly decided, both by doctrine and examples, how far our liberty should be either moderated or asserted on the occurrence of offences. When he made Timothy his associate, he circumcised him: (a) but could not be induced to circumcise Titus. (b) Here was a difference in his proceedings, but no change of mind or of purpose. In the circumcision of Timothy, “though he was free from all men, yet he made himself servant unto all;” and, says he, “Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” (c) Thus we have a proper moderation of liberty, if it may be indifferently restricted with any advantage. His reason for resolutely refraining from circumcising Titus, he declares in the following words; “But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who

(x) 1 Cor. x. 25, 29, 32.

(y) Gal. v. 13.

(z) Matt. xv. 14.

(a) Acts xvi. 3.

(b) Gal. ii. 3.

(c) 1 Cor. ix. 19, 20, 22.

came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you.” (d) We also are under the necessity of vindicating our liberty, if it be endangered in weak consciences by the iniquitous requisitions of false apostles. We must at all times study charity, and keep in view the edification of our neighbour. “All things (says Paul) are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s.” (e) Nothing can be plainer than this rule, that our liberty should be used, if it conduces to our neighbour’s edification; but that if it be not beneficial to our neighbour, it should be abridged. There are some, who pretend to imitate the prudence of Paul in refraining from the exercise of liberty, while they are merely employing themselves in the duties of charity. For to promote their own tranquillity, they wish all mention of liberty to be buried; whereas it is no less advantageous to our neighbours sometimes to use our liberty to their benefit and edification, than at other times to moderate it for their accommodation. But a pious man considers this liberty in external things as granted him in order that he may be the better prepared for all the duties of charity.

XIII. But whatever I have advanced respecting the avoidance of offences, I wish to be referred to indifferent and unimportant things; for necessary duties must not be omitted through fear of any offence: as our liberty should be subject to charity; so charity itself ought to be subservient to the purity of faith. It becomes us, indeed, to have regard to charity; but we must not offend God for the love of our neighbour. We cannot approve the intemperance of those, who do nothing but in a tumultuous manner, and who prefer violent measures to lenient ones. Nor must we listen to those, who, while they shew themselves the leaders in a thousand species of impiety, pretend that they are obliged to act in such a manner, as to give no offence to their neighbours; as though they are not at

(d) Gal. ii. 3—5.

(e) 1 Cor. x. 23, 24.

the same time fortifying the consciences of their neighbours in sin; especially since they are always sticking in the same mire without any hope of deliverance. And whether their neighbour is to be instructed by doctrine or by example, they enviously maintain that he ought to be fed with milk, though they are infecting him with the worst and most pernicious notions. Paul tells the Corinthians, "I have fed you with milk;" (*m*) but if the Popish mass had been then introduced among them, would he have united in that pretended sacrifice in order to feed them with milk? Certainly not; for milk is not poison. They are guilty of falsehood, therefore, in saying that they feed those, whom they cruelly murder under the appearance of such flatteries. But admitting that such dissimulation is to be approved for a time, how long will they feed their children with milk? For if they never grow, so as to be able to bear even some light meat, it is a clear proof that they were never accustomed to milk. I am prevented from pushing this controversy with them any further at present, by two reasons: first, because their absurdities scarcely deserve a refutation, being justly despised by all men of sound understanding; secondly, having done this at large in particular treatises, I am unwilling to travel the same ground over again. Only let the readers remember, that with whatever offences Satan and the world may endeavour to divert us from the ordinances of God, or to retard our pursuit of what he enjoins, yet we must nevertheless strenuously advance; and moreover, that whatever dangers threaten us, we are not at liberty to deviate even a hair's breadth from his command, and that it is not lawful under any pretext to attempt any thing but what he permits.

XIV. Now since the consciences of the faithful, being privileged with the liberty which we have described, have been delivered by the favour of Christ from all necessary obligation to the observance of those things in which the Lord hath been pleased they should be left free; we conclude that they are exempt from all human authority. For it is not right that Christ should lose the acknowledgments due to such kindness, or our consciences the benefit of it. Neither is that to be account-

ed a trivial thing, which we see cost Christ so much; which he estimated not with gold or silver, but with his own blood: (*n*) so that Paul hesitates not to assert, that his death is rendered vain, if we suffer our souls to be in subjection to men. (*o*) For his sole object in some chapters of his Epistle to the Galatians is to prove that Christ is obscured or rather abolished with respect to us, unless our consciences continue in their liberty; from which they are certainly fallen, if they can be ensnared in the bonds of laws and ordinances at the pleasure of men. (*p*) But as it is a subject highly worthy of being understood, so it needs a more diffuse and perspicuous explanation. [For as soon as a word is mentioned concerning the abrogation of human establishments, great tumults are excited, partly by seditious persons, partly by cavillers; as though all obedience of men were at once subverted and destroyed.]

XV. To prevent any one from falling into this error, let us therefore consider, in the first place, that man is under two kinds of government; one spiritual, by which the conscience is formed to piety and the service of God; the other political, by which a man is instructed in the duties of humanity and civility, which are to be observed in an intercourse with mankind. They are generally, and not improperly, denominated the Spiritual and the Temporal jurisdiction; indicating that the former species of government pertains to the life of the soul; and that the latter relates to the concerns of the present state; not only to the provision of food and clothing, but to the enactment of laws to regulate a man's life among his neighbours by the rules of holiness, integrity, and sobriety. For the former has its seat in the interior of the mind, whilst the latter only directs the external conduct: one may be termed a spiritual kingdom, and the other a political one. But these two, as we have distinguished them, always require to be considered separately; and while the one is under discussion, the mind must be abstracted from all consideration of the other. For man contains as it were two worlds, capable of being governed by various rulers and various laws. This distinction will prevent what the Gospel inculcates concerning spiritual liberty from being misap-

(*n*) 1 Peter i. 18, 19.(*o*) Gal. v. 1, 4.(*p*) 1 Cor. vii. 23.

plied to political circumstances; as though Christians were less subject to the external government of human laws, because their consciences have been set at liberty before God; as though their freedom of spirit necessarily exempted them from all carnal servitude. Again, because even in those constitutions which seem to pertain to the spiritual kingdom, there may possibly be some deception, it is necessary to discriminate between these also; which are to be accounted legitimate, as according with the Divine word, and which, on the contrary, ought not to be received among the faithful. Of civil government I shall treat in another place. Of ecclesiastical laws also I forbear to speak at present; because a full discussion of them will be proper in the Fourth Book, where we shall treat of the power of the Church. But we shall conclude the present argument in the following manner. The question, which, as I have observed, is in itself not very obscure or intricate, greatly perplexes many, because they do not distinguish with sufficient precision between the external jurisdiction and the court of conscience. The difficulty is increased by Paul's injunction to obey magistrates "not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake:" (q) from which it should follow, that the conscience also is bound by political laws. But if this were true, it would supersede all that we have already said, or are now about to say, respecting spiritual government. For the solution of this difficulty, it will be of use, first, to know what conscience is. And the definition of it must be derived from the etymology of the word. For as when men apprehend the knowledge of things in the mind and understanding, they are thence said (*scire*) "to know," whence is derived the word *scientia*, "science" or "knowledge;" so when they have a sense of the Divine justice, as an additional witness, which permits them not to conceal their sins, or to elude accusation at the tribunal of the supreme Judge, this sense is termed *conscientia*, "conscience." For it is a kind of medium between God and man; because it does not suffer a man to suppress what he knows within himself, but pursues him till it brings him to conviction. This is what Paul means by "their conscience also bearing witness, and

their thoughts accusing, or else excusing one another.” (r) Simple knowledge might remain as it were confined within a man. This sentiment, therefore, which places man before the Divine tribunal, is appointed, as it were, to watch over man, to observe and examine all his secrets, that nothing may remain enveloped in darkness. Hence the old proverb, Conscience is as a thousand witnesses. For the same reason Peter speaks of “the answer of a good conscience towards God,” (s) to express our tranquillity of mind, when, persuaded of the favour of Christ, we present ourselves with boldness in the presence of God. And the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews expresses absolution or freedom from every future charge of sin, by “having no more conscience of sin.” (t)

XVI. Therefore, as works respect men, so conscience regards God: so that a good conscience is no other than inward integrity of heart. In which sense Paul says, that “the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.” (u) Afterwards also, in the same chapter, he shews how widely it differs from understanding, saying, that “some, having put away a good conscience, concerning faith have made shipwreck.” (w) For these words indicate that it is a lively inclination to the service of God, and a sincere pursuit of piety and holiness of life. Sometimes, indeed, it is likewise extended to men; as when the same apostle declares, “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.” (x) But the reason of this assertion is, that the fruits of a good conscience reach even to men. But in strict propriety of speech, it has to do with God alone, as I have already observed. Hence it is that a law, which simply binds a man without relation to other men, or any consideration of them, is said to bind the conscience. For example, God not only enjoins the preservation of the mind chaste and pure from every libidinous desire, but prohibits all obscenity of language and external lasciviousness. The observance of this law is incumbent on my conscience, though there were not another man existing in the world. Thus he who transgresses the limits of temperance, not only sins by

(r) Rom. ii. 15.

(s) 1 Peter iii. 21.

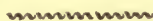
(t) Heb. x. 2.

(u) 1 Tim. i. 5.

(w) 1 Tim. i. 19.

(x) Acts xxiv. 16.

giving a bad example to his brethren, but contracts guilt on his conscience before God. Things in themselves indifferent are to be guided by other considerations. It is our duty to abstain from them, if they tend to the least offence, yet without violating our liberty of conscience. So Paul speaks concerning meat consecrated to idols: "If any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice to idols, eat not for conscience sake: conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other." (y) A pious man would be guilty of sin, who, being previously admonished, should nevertheless eat such meat. But though with respect to his brother, abstinence is necessary for him, as it is enjoined by God; yet he ceases not to retain liberty of conscience. We see then how this law, though it binds the external action, leaves the conscience free.



CHAPTER XX.

On Prayer, the principal Exercise of Faith, and the Medium of our daily Reception of Divine Blessings.

FROM the subjects already discussed, we clearly perceive how utterly destitute man is of every good, and in want of all the means of salvation. Wherefore if he seek for relief in his necessities, he must go out of himself, and obtain it from some other quarter. It has been subsequently stated, that the Lord voluntarily and liberally manifests himself in his Christ, in whom he offers us all felicity instead of our misery, and opulence instead of our poverty; in whom he opens to our view the treasures of heaven, that our faith may be wholly engaged in the contemplation of his beloved Son, that all our expectation may depend upon him, and that in him all our hope may rest and be fully satisfied. This indeed is that secret and recondite philosophy, which cannot be extracted from syllogisms; but is well understood by those whose eyes God hath opened, that in

(y) 1 Cor. x. 28, 29.

his light they may see light. But since we have been taught by faith to acknowledge, that whatever we want for the supply of our necessities is in God and our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom it hath pleased the Father all the fulness of his bounty should dwell, that we may all draw from it, as from a most copious fountain; it remains for us to seek in him, and by prayers to implore of him, that which we have been informed resides in him. Otherwise to know God as the Lord and Giver of every good, who invites us to supplicate him, but neither to approach him nor to supplicate him, would be equally unprofitable, as for a man to neglect a treasure discovered to him buried in the earth. Wherefore the apostle, to shew that true faith cannot but be engaged in calling upon God, has laid down this order: That, as faith is produced by the gospel, so by faith our hearts are brought to invoke the name of the Lord. (z) And this is the same as he had a little before said, that the "Spirit of adoption," who seals the testimony of the gospel in our hearts, encourages our spirits, so that they venture to pour out their desires before God, excite "groanings that cannot be uttered," and cry with confidence, "Abba, Father." (a) This last subject, therefore, having been before only cursorily mentioned and slightly touched, requires now to be treated more at large.

II. By means of prayer, then, we penetrate to those riches which are reserved with our heavenly Father for our use. For between God and men there is a certain communication; by which they enter into the sanctuary of heaven, and in his immediate presence remind him of his promises, in order that his declarations, which they have implicitly believed, may in time of necessity be verified in their experience. We see, therefore, that nothing is revealed to us, to be expected from the Lord, for which we are not likewise enjoined to pray; so true is it, that prayer digs out those treasures, which the gospel of the Lord discovers to our faith. Now the necessity and various utility of the exercise of prayer no language can sufficiently explain. It is certainly not without reason that our heavenly Father declares, that the only fortress of salvation consists in invocation of his name; by which we call to our aid the pre-

(z) Rom. x. 13, 14, 17.

(a) Rom. viii. 15, 26.

sence of his providence, which watches over all our concerns; of his power, which supports us when weak and ready to faint; and of his goodness, which receives us into favour, though miserably burdened with sins; in which, finally, we call upon him to manifest his presence with us in all his attributes. Hence our consciences derive peculiar peace and tranquillity: for when the affliction which oppressed us is represented to the Lord, we feel abundant composure even from this consideration, that none of our troubles are concealed from him, whom we know to possess both the greatest readiness and the greatest ability to promote our truest interest.

III. But some will say, Does he not, without information, know both our troubles and our necessities; so that it may appear unnecessary to solicit him with our prayers, as if he were inattentive or sleeping, till aroused by our voice? But such reasoners advert not to the Lord's end in teaching his people to pray; for he hath appointed it not so much for his own sake as for ours. It is his pleasure indeed, as is highly reasonable, that his right be rendered to him, by their considering him as the Author of all that is desired and found useful by men, and by their acknowledgments of this in their prayers. But the utility of this sacrifice, by which he is worshipped, returns to us. The greater the confidence, therefore, with which the ancient saints gloried in the Divine benefits to themselves and others, with so much the more earnestness were they incited to pray. The single example of Elijah shall suffice, who, though certain of God's design, having already with sufficient authority promised rain to king Ahab, yet anxiously prays between his knees, and sends his servant seven times to look for it: (*b*) not with an intention to discredit the Divine oracle, but under a conviction of his duty to prevent his faith becoming languid and torpid, by pouring out his prayers before God. Wherefore, although when we are stupid and insensible to our own miseries, he vigilantly watches and guards us, and sometimes affords us unsolicited succour; yet it highly concerns us assiduously to supplicate him, that our heart may be always inflamed with a serious and ardent desire of seeking, loving, and worshipping him, while

(*b*) 1 Kings xviii. 42, &c.

we accustom ourselves in all our necessities to resort to him as our last refuge. Further, that no desire or wish, which we should be ashamed for him to know, may enter our minds; when we learn to present our wishes and so to pour out our whole heart in his presence. Next, that we may be prepared to receive his blessings with true gratitude of soul, and even with grateful acknowledgments; being reminded by our praying that they come from his hand. Moreover, that when we have obtained what we sought, the persuasion that he has answered our requests may excite us to more ardent meditations on his goodness, and produce a more joyful welcome of those things which we acknowledge to be the fruits of our prayers. Lastly, that use and experience itself may yield our minds a confirmation of his providence in proportion to our imbecility, while we apprehend that he not only promises never to forsake us, and freely opens a way of access for our addressing him in the very moment of necessity; but that his hand is always extended to assist his people, whom he does not feed with mere words, but supports with present aid. On these accounts our most merciful Father, though liable to no sleep or languor, yet frequently appears as if he were sleepy or languid, in order to exercise us, who are otherwise slothful and inactive, in approaching, supplicating, and earnestly importuning him to our own advantage. It is extremely absurd, therefore, in them who, with a view to divert the minds of men from praying to God, pretend that it is useless for us by our interruptions to weary the Divine Providence, which is engaged in the conservation of all things; whereas the Lord declares, on the contrary, that he "is nigh to all that call upon him in truth." (c) And equally nugatory is the objection of others, that it is superfluous to petition for those things which the Lord is ready voluntarily to bestow; whereas even those very things, which flow to us from his spontaneous liberality, he wishes us to consider as granted to our prayers. This is evinced by that memorable passage in the Psalms, as well as by many other correspondent texts; "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry;" (d) which celebrates the Divine

(c) Psalm cxlv. 18.

(d) Psalm xxxiv. 15.

Providence as spontaneously engaged to accomplish the salvation of the faithful; yet does not omit the exercise of faith, by which sloth is expelled from the minds of men. The eyes of God then are vigilant to succour the necessity of the blind; but he is likewise willing to hear our groans, to give a better proof of his love towards us. And thus it is equally true, that "he that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps," and yet that he remains as it were forgetful of us, while he beholds us slothful and dumb.

IV. Now for conducting prayer in a right and proper manner, the first rule is; that our heart and mind be composed to a suitable frame, becoming those who enter into conversation with God. This state of mind we shall certainly attain, if, divested of all carnal cares and thoughts, that tend to divert and seduce it from a right and clear view of God, it not only devotes itself entirely to the solemn exercise, but is likewise as far as possible elevated and carried above itself. Nor do I here require a mind so disengaged as to be disturbed by no solicitude; since there ought, on the contrary, most anxiously to be kindled within us a fervency of prayer (as we see the holy servants of God discover great solicitude, and even anguish, when they say they utter their complaints to the Lord from the deep abysses of affliction and the very jaws of death). But I maintain the necessity of dismissing all foreign and external cares, by which the wandering mind may be hurried hither and thither, and dragged from heaven down to earth. It ought to be elevated above itself, that it may not intrude into the Divine presence any of the imaginations of our blind and foolish reason, nor confine itself within the limits of its own vanity, but rise to purity worthy of God.

V. Both these things are highly worthy of observation: first, that whoever engages in prayer, should apply all his faculties and attention to it, and not be distracted, as is commonly the case, with wandering thoughts; nothing being more contrary to a reverence for God than such levity, which indicates a licentious spirit, wholly unrestrained by fear. In this case our exertions must be great in proportion to the difficulty we experience. For no man can be so intent on praying, but he may perceive many irregular thoughts intruding on him, and either interrupt-

ing or by some oblique digression retarding the course of his devotions. But here let us consider what an indignity it is, when God admits us to familiar intercourse with him, to abuse such great condescension by a mixture of things sacred and profane, while our thoughts are not confined to him by reverential awe; but, as if we were conversing with a mean mortal, we quit him in the midst of our prayer, and make excursions on every side. We may be assured, therefore, that none are rightly prepared for the exercise of prayer, but those who are so affected by the Divine majesty as to come to it divested of all earthly cares and affections. And this is indicated by the ceremony of lifting up the hands, that men may remember that they are at a great distance from God, unless they lift up their thoughts on high. As it is also expressed in the Psalm; “Unto thee do I lift up my soul.” (e) And the Scripture frequently uses this mode of expression, “to lift up one’s prayer;” that they, who desire to be heard by God, may not sink into lethargic inactivity. To sum up the whole, the greater the liberality of God towards us, in gently inviting us to exonerate ourselves of our cares by casting them on him, the less excusable are we, unless his signal and incomparable favour preponderate with us beyond every thing else, and attract us to him in a serious application of all our faculties and attention to the duty of prayer; which cannot be done unless our mind by strenuous exertion rise superior to every impediment. Our second proposition is, that we must pray for no more than God permits. For though he enjoins us to pour out our hearts before him, (f) yet he does not carelessly give the reins to affections of folly and depravity: and when he promises to “fulfil the desire” (g) of the faithful, he does not go to such an extreme of indulgence, as to subject himself to their caprice. But offences against both these rules are common and great; for most men not only presume without modesty or reverence to address God concerning their follies, and impudently to utter at his tribunal whatever has amused them in their reveries or dreams; but so great is their folly or stupidity, that they dare to obtrude upon God all their foulest desires, which they would

(e) Psalm xxv. 1.

(f) Psalm lxii. 8.

(g) Psalm cxlv. 19.

be exceedingly ashamed to reveal to men. Some heathens have ridiculed and even detested this presumption, but the vice itself has always prevailed: and hence it was that the ambitious chose Jupiter as their patron; the avaricious, Mercury; the lovers of learning, Apollo and Minervā; the warlike, Mars; and the libidinous, Venus. Just as in the present age (as I have lately hinted) men indulge a greater license to their unlawful desires in their prayers, than if they were conversing in a jocular manner with their equals. God suffers not his indulgence to be so mocked, but asserts his power, and subjects our devotions to his commands. Therefore we ought to remember this passage in John; "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." (*h*) But as our abilities are very unequal to such great perfection, we must seek some remedy to relieve us. As the attention of the mind ought to be fixed on God, so it is necessary that it should be followed by the affection of the heart. But they both remain far before this elevation; or rather, to speak more consistently with truth, they grow weary and fail in the ascent, or are carried a contrary course. Therefore, to assist this imbecility, God gives us the Spirit, to be the director of our prayers, to suggest what is right, and to regulate our affections. For "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered:" (*i*) not that he really prays or groans; but he excites within us confidence, desires, and sighs, to the conception of which our native powers were altogether inadequate. Nor is it without reason that Paul terms those, which arise from the faithful under the influence of the Spirit, "groanings which cannot be uttered:" because they who are truly engaged in prayers, are not ignorant that they are so perplexed with dubious anxieties, that they can scarcely decide what it is expedient to utter: and even while they are attempting to lisp, they stammer and hesitate: whence it follows that the ability of praying rightly is a peculiar gift. These things are not said in order that we may indulge our own indolence, resigning the office of

(*h*) 1 John v. 14.(*i*) Rom. viii. 26.

prayer to the Spirit of God, and growing torpid in that negligence to which we are too prone; according to the impious errors of some, that we should wait in indolent supineness till he call our minds from other engagements and draw them to himself; but rather that, wearied with our sloth and inactivity, we may implore this assistance of the Spirit. Nor does the apostle, when he exhorts us to "pray in the Holy Ghost," (k) encourage us to remit our vigilance; signifying, that the inspiration of the Spirit operates in the formation of our prayers, so as not in the least to impede or retard our own exertions; since it is the will of God to prove in this instance the efficacious influence of faith on our hearts.

VI. Let this be the second rule; That in our supplications we should have a real and permanent sense of our indigence, and seriously considering our necessity of all that we ask, should join with the petitions themselves a serious and ardent desire of obtaining them. For multitudes carelessly recite a form of prayer, as though they were discharging a task imposed on them by God; and though they confess that this is a remedy necessary for their calamities, since it would be certain destruction to be destitute of the Divine aid which they implore; yet, that they perform this duty merely in compliance with custom, is evident from the coldness of their hearts and their inattention to the nature of their petitions. They are led to this by some general and confused sense of their necessity, which nevertheless does not excite them to implore a relief for their great need as a case of present urgency. Now what can we imagine more odious or execrable to God than this hypocrisy, when any man prays for the pardon of sins, who at the same time thinks he is not a sinner, or at least does not think that he is a sinner? which is an open mockery of God himself. But such depravity, as I have before observed, pervades the whole human race, that as a matter of form they frequently implore of God many things which they either expect to receive from some other source independent of his goodness, or imagine themselves already to possess. The crime of some others appears to be smaller, but yet too great to be tolerated; who,

(k) Jude 20. 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

having only imbibed this principle, that God must be propitiated by devotions, mutter over their prayers without meditation. But the faithful ought to be exceedingly cautious, never to enter into the presence of God to present any petition, without being inflamed with a fervent affection of soul, and feeling an ardent desire to obtain it from him. Moreover, although in those things which we request only for the Divine glory, we do not at the first glance appear to regard our own necessity, yet it is incumbent on us to pray for them with equal fervour and vehemence of desire. As when we pray that his name may be hallowed, or sanctified, we ought (so to speak) ardently to hunger and thirst for that sanctification.

VII. If any man object, that we are not always urged to pray by the same necessity, this I grant, and this distinction is usefully represented to us by James; "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms." (1) Common sense itself therefore dictates, that because of our extreme indolence, we are the more vigorously stimulated by God to earnestness in prayer according to the exigencies of our condition. And this David calls "a time when God may be found," (m) because (as he teaches in many other places) the more severely we are oppressed by troubles, disasters, fears, and all kinds of temptations, we have the greater liberty of access to God, as though he then particularly invited us to approach him. At the same time, it is equally true that we ought to be, as Paul says, "praying always," (n) because, how great soever we may believe the prosperity of our affairs, and though we are surrounded on every side by matter of joy, yet there is no moment of time, in which our necessity does not furnish incitements to prayer. Does any one abound in wine and corn? Since he cannot enjoy a morsel of bread but by the continual favour of God, his cellars or barns afford no objection to his praying for daily bread. Now if we reflect how many dangers threaten us every moment, fear itself will teach us that there is no time in which prayer is unsuitable to us. Yet this may be discovered still better in spiritual concerns. For when will so many sins, of which we are conscious, suffer us to remain in security, without humbly deprecating both the

(1) James v. 13.

(m) Psalm xxxii. 6.

(n) Ephes. vi. 18.

guilt and the punishment? When will temptations grant us a truce, so that we need not be in haste to obtain assistance? Besides, an ardent desire of the Divine kingdom and glory ought irresistibly to attract us, not by intervals, but without intermission, rendering every season equally suitable. It is not in vain, therefore, that assiduity in prayer is so frequently enjoined. I speak not yet of perseverance, which shall be mentioned hereafter; but the scriptural admonitions to "pray without ceasing" are so many reproofs of our sloth; because we feel not our need of this care and diligence. This rule precludes and banishes from prayer, hypocrisy, subtilty, and falsehood. God promises that he will be near to all who call upon him in truth, and declares he will be found by those who seek him with their whole heart. But to this, persons pleased with their own impurity never aspire. Legitimate prayer, therefore, requires repentance. Whence it is frequently said in the Scriptures, that God heareth not the wicked, and that their prayers are an abomination; as are also their sacrifices: for it is reasonable, that they who shut up their own hearts, should find the ears of God closed against them; and God should be inflexible to them who provoke his rigour by their obduracy. In Isaiah, he threatens thus; "When ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." (*o*) Again, in Jeremiah, "I protested, yet they inclined not their ear. Therefore, though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them." (*p*) Because he considers himself grossly insulted by the wicked boasting of his covenant, while they are continually dishonouring his sacred name. Wherefore he complains, in Isaiah; "This people draw near me with their mouth, but have removed their heart far from me." (*q*) He does not restrict this solely to prayer; but asserts his abhorrence of hypocrisy in every branch of his worship. Which is the meaning of this passage in James; "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." (*r*) It is true, indeed (as we shall presently again see), that the prayers of the faithful depend not on their personal worthiness; yet this does not supersede

(*o*) Isaiah i. 15.

(*q*) Isaiah xxix. 13.

(*p*) Jer. xi. 7, 8, 11.

(*r*) James iv. 3.

the admonition of John; "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments:" (*s*) because an evil conscience shuts the gate against us. Whence it follows, that none pray aright, and that no others are heard, but the sincere worshippers of God. Whosoever therefore engages in prayer, should be displeased with himself on account of his sins, and assume, what he cannot do without repentance, the character and disposition of a beggar.

VIII. To these must be added a third rule, That whoever presents himself before God for the purpose of praying to him, must renounce every idea of his own glory, reject all opinion of his own merit, and, in a word, relinquish all confidence in himself, giving, by this humiliation of himself, all the glory entirely to God; lest arrogating any thing, though ever so little, to ourselves, we perish from his presence in consequence of our vanity. Of this submission, which prostrates every high thought, we have frequent examples in the servants of God; of whom the most eminent for holiness feel the greatest consternation on entering into the presence of the Lord. Thus Daniel, whom the Lord himself hath so highly commended, said; "We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God; for thy city and thy people are called by thy name." (*t*) Nor does he, as is generally the case, confound himself with the multitude, as one of the people; but makes a separate confession of his own guilt, resorting as a suppliant to the asylum of pardon: as he expressly declares, "Whilst I was confessing my sin, and the sin of my people." (*v*) We are taught the same humility also by the example of David; "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." (*u*) In this manner Isaiah prays; "Behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in thy ways is continuance, and we shall be saved. For we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name,

(*s*) 1 John iii. 22. (*t*) Dan. ix. 18, 19. (*v*) Dan. ix. 20. (*u*) Psalm cxliiii. 2.

that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people.” (w) Observe, they have no dependence, but this; that considering themselves as God’s children, they despair not of his future care of them. Thus Jeremiah; “Though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name’s sake.” (x) For that is equally consistent with the strictest truth and holiness, which was written by an uncertain author, but is ascribed to the prophet Baruch: “A soul sorrowful and desolate for the greatness of its sin, bowed down and infirm, a hungry soul and fainting eyes give glory to thee, O Lord. Not according to the righteousnesses of our fathers do we pour out our prayers in thy sight, and ask mercy before thy face, O Lord, our God; but because thou art merciful, have mercy upon us, for we have sinned against thee.” (y)

IX. Finally, the commencement and even introduction to praying rightly is a supplication for pardon with a humble and ingenuous confession of guilt. For neither is there any hope that even the holiest of men can obtain any blessing of God till he be freely reconciled to him, nor is it possible for God to be propitious to any, but those whom he pardons. It is no wonder then, if the faithful with this key open to themselves the gate of prayer; as we learn from many places in the Psalms. For David, when requesting another thing, says; “Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness sake, O Lord.” Again, “Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.” (z) Where we likewise perceive, that it is not sufficient for us to call ourselves to a daily account for recent sins, unless we remember those which might seem to have been long buried in oblivion. For the same Psalmist in another place, (a) having confessed one grievous crime, takes occasion thence to revert to his mother’s womb, where he had contract-

(w) Isaiah lxiv. 5—9.

(x) Jer. xiv. 7.

(y) Baruch ii. 18.

(z) Psalm xiv. 7, 18.

(a) Psalm li. 5.

ed his original pollution: not in order to extenuate his guilt by the corruption of his nature, but that, accumulating all the sins of his life, he may find God the more ready to listen to his prayers in proportion to the severity of his self-condemnation. But though the saints do not always in express terms pray for remission of sins, yet if we diligently examine their prayers recited in the Scriptures, it will easily appear, as I assert, that they derived their encouragement to pray from the mere mercy of God, and so always began by deprecating his displeasure: for if every man examine his own conscience, he is so far from presuming familiarly to communicate his cares to God, that he trembles at every approach to him, except in a reliance on his mercy and forgiveness. There is also indeed another special confession, when they wish for an alleviation of punishments, which is tacitly praying for the pardon of their sins: because it were absurd to desire the removal of an effect, while the cause remains. For we must beware of imitating foolish patients, who are only solicitous for the cure of the symptoms, but neglect the radical cause of the disease. Besides, we should first seek for God to be propitious to us, previously to any external testimonies of his favour: because it is his own will to observe this order, and it would be of little advantage to us to receive benefits from him, unless a discovery to the conscience of his being appeased towards us rendered him altogether amiable in our view. Of this we are likewise apprised by the reply of Christ; for when he had determined to heal a paralytic person, he said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee:" (*b*) thereby calling our attention to that which ought to be the chief object of desire, that God may receive us into his favour, and then, by affording us assistance, discover the effect of reconciliation. But beside the special confession of present guilt, in which the faithful implore the pardon of every sin and the remission of every punishment, that general preface, which conciliates a favourable attention to our prayers, is never to be omitted; because, unless they be founded on God's free mercy, they will all be unavailing. To this topic we may refer that passage of John; "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive

us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (c) Wherefore, under the law prayers are required to be consecrated by an atonement of blood, to render them acceptable, and to remind the people that they were unworthy of so great and honourable a privilege, till, purified from their pollutions, they should derive confidence in prayer from the mere mercy of God.

X. But when the saints sometimes appear to urge their own righteousness as an argument in their supplications with God, (as when David says, “Preserve my soul: for I am holy.” (d) And Hezekiah; “I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and have done that which is good in thy sight,”) (e) their only design in such modes of expression is, from their regeneration to prove themselves to be servants and sons of God, to whom he declares he will be propitious. He tells us by the Psalmist (as we have already seen), that “his eyes are upon the righteous, and that his ears are open unto their cry:” (f) and again, by the apostle; that “whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments:” (g) in which passages he does not determine the value of prayer according to the merit of works; but intends by them to establish the confidence of those who are conscious to themselves, as all the faithful ought to be, of unfeigned integrity and innocence. For the observation in John, made by the blind man who received his sight, that “God heareth not sinners,” (h) is a principle of Divine truth, if we understand the word *sinners* in the common acceptation of Scripture, to signify those who are all asleep and content in their sins, without any desire of righteousness: since no heart can ever break out into a sincere invocation of God, unaccompanied with aspirations after piety. To such promises, therefore, correspond those declarations of the saints, in which they introduce the mention of their own purity or innocence, that they may experience a manifestation to themselves of what is to be expected by all the servants of God. Besides, they are generally found in the use of this species of prayer, when before the Lord they compare themselves with their enemies, from whose iniquity

(c) 1 John i. 9.

(d) Psalm lxxxvi. 2.

(e) 2 Kings xx. 3.

(f) Psalm xxxiv. 15.

(g) 1 John iii. 22.

(h) John ix. 31.

they desire him to deliver them. Now in this comparison we need not wonder, if they produce their righteousness and simplicity of heart, in order to prevail upon him by the justice of their cause to yield the more ready assistance. We object not, therefore, to the pious heart of a good man making use before the Lord of the consciousness of his own purity, for his confirmation in the promises which the Lord hath given for the consolation and support of his true worshippers; but his confidence of success we wish to be independent of every consideration of personal merit, and to rest solely on the Divine clemency.

XI. The fourth and last rule is, That thus prostrate with true humility, we should nevertheless be animated to pray by the certain hope of obtaining our requests. It is indeed an apparent contradiction, to connect a certain confidence of God's favour with a sense of his righteous vengeance: though these two things are perfectly consistent, if persons oppressed by their own guilt be encouraged solely by the Divine goodness. For as we have before stated that repentance and faith, of which one terrifies, and the other exhilarates, are inseparably connected; so their union is necessary in prayer. And this agreement is briefly expressed by David; "I will come (says he) into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple." (i) Under the "goodness of God," he comprehends faith, though not to the exclusion of fear: for his majesty not only commands our reverence, but our own unworthiness makes us forget all pride and security, and fills us with fear. I do not mean a confidence which delivers the mind from all sense of anxiety, and soothes it into pleasant and perfect tranquillity: for such a placid satisfaction belongs to those whose prosperity is equal to their wishes, who are affected by no care, corroded by no desire, and alarmed by no fear. And the saints have an excellent stimulus to calling upon God, when their necessities and perplexities harass and disquiet them, and they are almost despairing in themselves, till faith opportunely relieves them; because, amidst such troubles, the goodness of God is so glorious in their view, that

(i) Psalm v. 7.

though they groan under the pressure of present calamities, and are likewise tormented with the fear of greater in future, yet a reliance on it alleviates the difficulty of bearing them, and encourages a hope of deliverance. The prayers of a pious man, therefore, must proceed from both these dispositions, and must also contain and discover them both: though he must groan under present evils and is anxiously afraid of new ones, yet at the same time he must resort for refuge to God, not doubting his readiness to extend the assistance of his hand. For God is highly incensed by our distrust, if we supplicate him for blessings which we have no expectation of receiving. There is nothing, therefore, more suitable to the nature of prayers, than that they be conformed to this rule; not to rush forward with temerity, but to follow the steps of faith. To this principle Christ calls the attention of us all in the following passage; "I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." (*k*) This he confirms also in another place; "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." (*l*) With which James agrees; "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." (*m*) Where, by opposing "faith" to "wavering," he very aptly expresses its nature. And equally worthy of attention is what he adds, that they avail nothing, who call upon God in perplexity and doubt, and are uncertain in their minds whether they shall be heard or not; whom he even compares to waves, which are variously tossed and driven about with the wind. Whence he elsewhere calls a legitimate prayer "the prayer of faith." (*n*) Besides, when God so frequently affirms, that he will give to every man according to his faith, he implies that we can obtain nothing without faith. Finally, it is faith that obtains whatever is granted in answer to prayer. This is the meaning of that famous passage of Paul, to which injudicious men pay little attention; "How shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the

(*k*) Mark xi. 24. (*l*) Matt. xxi. 22. (*m*) James i. 5, 6. (*n*) James v. 15.

word of God.” (*o*) For by a regular deduction of prayer originally from faith, he evidently contends, that God cannot be sincerely invoked by any, but those to whom his clemency and gentleness have been revealed and familiarly discovered by the preaching of the Gospel.

XII. This necessity our adversaries never consider. Therefore, when we inculcate on the faithful a certain confidence of mind that God is propitious and benevolent towards them, they consider us as advancing the greatest of all absurdities. But if they were in the habit of true prayer, they would certainly understand, that there can be no proper invocation of God without such a strong sense of the Divine benevolence. But since no man can fully discover the power of faith without an experience of it in his heart; what advantage can arise from disputing with such men, who plainly prove that they never had any other than a vain imagination? For the value and necessity of that assurance which we require, is chiefly learned by prayer; which he who does not perceive, betrays great stupidity of conscience. Leaving then this class of blinded mortals, let us ever abide by the decision of Paul, that God cannot be called upon, but by those who receive from the gospel a knowledge of his mercy, and a certain persuasion that it is ready for them. For what kind of an address would this be? “O Lord, I am truly in doubt, whether thou be willing to hear me; but since I am oppressed with anxiety, I flee to thee, that if I be worthy thou mayest assist me.” This does not resemble the solicitude of the saints, whose prayers we read in the Scriptures. Nor is it agreeable to the teaching of the Holy Spirit by the apostle; who commands us “to come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may find grace;” (*p*) and informs us, that “we have boldness and access, with confidence by the faith of Christ.” (*q*) This security of obtaining what we implore, therefore, which is both commanded by the Lord himself, and taught by the example of the saints, it becomes us to hold fast with all our might, if we would pray to any good purpose. For that prayer alone is accepted by God, which arises (if I may use the expression) from such a presumption of faith, and is founded on

(*o*) Rom. x. 14, 17.(*p*) Heb. iv. 16.(*q*) Ephes. iii. 12.

an undaunted assurance of hope. He might indeed have contented himself with the simple mention of "faith;" yet he has not only added "confidence," but furnished that confidence with liberty or "boldness," to distinguish by this criterion between us and unbelievers, who do indeed pray to God in common with us, but entirely at an uncertainty. For which reason, the whole Church prays in the Psalm; "Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee." (r) The Psalmist elsewhere introduces the same idea; "This I know; for God is for me." (s) Again, "In the morning, will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." (t) For from these words we gather, that prayers are but empty sounds, if unattended by hope, from which, as from a watch-tower, we quietly look out for God. With which corresponds the order of Paul's exhortation: for before exhorting believers to "pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," he first directs them to "take the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (v) Now let the reader recollect, what I have before asserted, that faith is not at all weakened by being connected with an acknowledgment of our misery, poverty, and impurity. For the faithful feel themselves oppressed by a grievous load of sins, while destitute of every thing which could conciliate the favour of God, and burdened with much guilt, which might justly render him an object of their dread, yet they cease not to present themselves before him, nor does this experience terrify them from resorting to him; since there is no other way of access to him. For prayer was instituted, not that we might arrogantly exalt ourselves in the presence of God, or form a high opinion of any thing of our own; but that we might confess our guilt to him, and deplore our miseries with the familiarity of children confiding their complaints to their parents. The immense accumulation of our distresses should operate as so many incitements to urge us to pray: as we are taught likewise by the example of the Psalmist; "Heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee." (u) I confess, indeed, that the operation of such incentives would be fatal, were it not for the Divine aid; but

(r) Psalm xxxiii. 22.

(s) Psalm lvi. 9.

(t) Psalm v. 3.

(u) Ephes. vi. 16, 18.

(v) Psalm xli. 4.

our most benevolent Father, in his incomparable mercy, hath afforded a timely remedy, that, allaying all perturbation, alleviating all cares, and dispelling all fears, he might gently allure us to himself, and facilitate our approach to him, by the removal of every obstacle and every doubt.

XIII. And in the first place, when he enjoins us to pray, the commandment itself implies a charge of impious contumacy, if we disobey it. No command can be more precise than that in the Psalm; "Call upon me in the day of trouble." (*w*) But as the Scripture recommends no one of the duties of piety more frequently, it is unnecessary to dwell any longer upon it. "Ask (says our Lord), and it shall be given you; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (*x*) To the precept, however, here is also annexed a promise, which is very necessary; for though all men acknowledge obedience to be due to a precept, yet the greater part of them would neglect the calls of God, if he did not promise to be propitious to them, and even to advance to meet them. These two positions being proved, it is evident that all those who turn their backs on God, or do not directly approach him, are not only guilty of disobedience and rebellion, but also convicted of unbelief; because they distrust the promises: which is the more worthy of observation, since hypocrites, under the pretext of humility and modesty, treat the command of God with such haughty contempt as to give no credit to his kind invitation, and even defraud him of a principal part of his worship. For after having refused sacrifices, in which all holiness then appeared to consist, he declares the principal and most acceptable part of his service to be, "calling upon him upon in the day of trouble." Wherefore, when he requires what is due to him, and animates us to a cheerful obedience, there are no pretexts for diffidence or hesitation sufficiently specious to excuse us. The numerous texts of Scripture, therefore, which enjoin us to call upon God, are as so many banners placed before our eyes to inspire us with confidence. It were temerity to rush into the presence of God, without a previous invitation from him. He therefore opens a way for us by his own word; "I will say, It is my people: and

(*w*) Psalm l. 15.(*x*) Matt. vii. 7.

they shall say, The Lord is my God.” (y) We see how he leads his worshippers, and desires them to follow him; and herefore that there is no reason to fear lest the melody, which he dictates, should not be agreeable to him. Let us particularly remember this remarkable character of God, by a reliance on which we shall easily surmount every obstacle; “O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.” (z) For what is more amiable or attractive than for God to bear this character, which assures us, that nothing is more agreeable to his nature, than to grant the requests of humble suppliants? Hence the Psalmist concludes that the way is open, not to a few only, but to all men; because he addresses all in these words, “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” (a) According to this rule, David, in order to obtain his request, pleads the promise that had been given him: “Thou, O Lord, hast revealed to thy servant—; therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray.” (b) Whence we conclude that he would have been fearful, had he not been encouraged by the promise. So in another place he furnishes himself with this general doctrine; “He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him.” (c) In the Psalms we may likewise observe the connection of prayer as it were interrupted, and sudden transitions made, sometimes to the power of God, sometimes to his goodness, and sometimes to the truth of his promises. It might appear as though David mutilated his prayers by an unseasonable introduction of such passages: but the faithful know by experience, that the ardour of devotion languishes, unless it be supported by fresh supplies; and therefore, a meditation on the nature and the word of God is far from being useless in the midst of our prayers. Let us not hesitate, then, to follow the example of David in the introduction of topics calculated to re-animate languid souls with new vigour.

XIV. And it is wonderful that we are no more affected with promises so exceedingly sweet; that the generality of men, wandering through a labyrinth of errors, after having forsaken

(y) Zech. xiii. 9.

(b) 2 Sam. vii. 27.

(z) Psalm lxx. 2.

(c) Psalm cxlv. 19.

(a) Psalm l. 15.

the fountain of living waters, prefer hewing out for themselves cisterns incapable of containing any water, to embracing the free offers of Divine goodness. "The name of the Lord (says Solomon) is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." (*d*) And Joel, after having predicted the speedy approach of a horrible destruction, adds this memorable sentence; "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be delivered;" (*e*) which we know properly refers to the course of the gospel. Scarcely one man in a hundred is induced to advance to meet the Lord. He proclaims by Isaiah, "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (*f*) And in another place he dignifies the whole Church in general with the same honour; as it belongs to all the members of Christ: "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him." (*g*) As I have before said, however, my design is not to enumerate all the texts, but to select the most remarkable, from which we may perceive the condescending kindness of God in inviting us to him, and the circumstances of aggravation attending our ingratitude, while our indolence still lingers in the midst of such powerful incitements. Wherefore, let these words perpetually resound in our ears; "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth;" (*h*) as well as those which we have cited from Isaiah and Joel; in which God affirms, that he is inclined to hear prayers, and is delighted, as with a sacrifice of a sweet savour, when we cast our cares upon him. We derive this singular benefit from the Divine promises, when our prayers are conceived without doubt or trepidation, but in reliance on his word, whose majesty would otherwise terrify us; we venture to call upon him as our Father, because he deigns to suggest to us this most delightful appellation. Favoured with such invitations, it remains for us to know that they furnish us with sufficient arguments to enforce our petitions; since our prayers rest on no intrinsic merit; but all their worthiness, as well as all our hope of obtaining our requests, is founded in, and dependent upon, the Divine promises; so that

(*d*) Prov. xviii. 10.(*g*) Psalm xci. 15.(*e*) Joel ii. 32.(*h*) Psalm cxlv. 18.(*f*) Isaiah lxxv. 24.

there is no need of any other support or further anxiety. Therefore, we may be fully assured, that though we equal not the sanctity so celebrated in holy patriarchs, prophets, and apostles; yet, since the command to pray is common to us as well as to them, and we are partakers of the same common faith, if we rely on the Divine word, we are associated with them in this privilege. For God's declaration, (already noticed,) that he will be gentle and merciful to all, gives all, even the most miserable, a hope of obtaining the objects of their supplications: and therefore we should remark the general forms of expression, by which no man, from the greatest to the least, is excluded: only let him possess sincerity of heart, self-abhorrence, humility, and faith; and let not our hypocrisy profane the name of God by a pretended invocation of him; our most merciful Father will not reject those whom he exhorts to approach him, and even urges by every possible mode of solicitation. Hence the argument of David's prayer, just recited, "Thou, O Lord, hast revealed to thy servant—; therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. And now, O Lord God, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant:" begin therefore and do it. (i) As also in another place; "Let thy kindness be according to thy word unto thy servant." (k) And all the Israelites together, whenever they fortify themselves with a recollection of the covenant, sufficiently declare that fear ought to be banished from our devotions, because it is contrary to the Divine injunction: and in this respect they imitated the examples of the patriarchs, particularly of Jacob, who, after having confessed himself "not worthy of the least of all the mercies" he had received from the hand of God, yet declares himself animated to pray for still greater blessings, because God had promised to grant them. (l) But whatever be the pretences of unbelievers, for not applying to God under the pressure of every necessity, for not seeking him or imploring his aid, they are equally chargeable with defrauding him of the honour due to him, as if they had fabricated for themselves new gods and idols; for by this conduct, they deny him to be the Author of all their blessings. On the

(i) 2 Sam. vii. 27, 28.

(k) Psalm cxix. 76.

(l) Gen. xxii. 10, &c.

contrary, there is nothing more efficacious to deliver the faithful from every scruple, than this consideration, that no impediment ought to prevent their acting according to the command of God, who declares that nothing is more agreeable to him than obedience. These observations tend more fully to elucidate what I have advanced before; that a spirit of boldness in prayer is perfectly consistent with fear, reverence, and solicitude; and that there is no absurdity in God's exalting those who are abased. This establishes an excellent agreement between those apparently repugnant forms of expression. Both Jeremiah and Daniel use this phrase; "Make prayers fall" before God; for so it is in the original. (*m*) Jeremiah also, "Let our supplication fall before thee." (*n*) Again, the faithful are frequently said to "lift up their prayer." (*o*) So says Hezekiah, when requesting the prophet to intercede for him. And David desires that his prayer may ascend "as incense." (*p*) For though, under a persuasion of God's fatherly love, they cheerfully commit themselves to his faithfulness, and hesitate not to implore the assistance he freely promises; yet they are not impudently elated with careless security, but ascend upwards by the steps of the promises, yet in such a manner, that they still continue to be suppliant and dejected in themselves.

XV. Here several questions are started. The scripture relates that the Lord has complied with some prayers, which nevertheless did not arise from a calm or well-regulated heart. Jotham, for a just cause indeed, but from the impulse of rage, resentment, and revenge, devoted the inhabitants of Shechem to the destruction which afterwards fell upon them: (*q*) the Lord, by fulfilling this curse, seems to approve of such disorderly sallies of passion. Samson also was hurried away by similar fervour when he said, "O Lord, strengthen me, that I may be avenged of the Philistines." (*r*) For though there was some mixture of honest zeal, yet it was a violent, and therefore sinful, avidity of revenge which predominated. God granted the request. Whence it seems deducible, that prayers not conformable to the rules of the Divine word, are nevertheless efficacious. I

(*m*) Jer. xlii. 9. Dan. ix. 18.(*p*) Psalm cxli. 2.(*n*) Jer. xlii. 2.(*q*) Judges ix. 20.(*o*) 2 Kings xix. 4.(*r*) Judges xvi. 28.

reply, first, that a permanent rule is not annulled by particular examples; secondly, that peculiar emotions have sometimes been excited in a few individuals, causing a distinction between them and men in general. For the answer of Christ to his disciples, who inconsiderately wished to emulate the example of Elias, "that they knew not what spirit they were of," is worthy of observation. But we must remark, further, that God is not always pleased with the prayers which he grants; but that as far as examples are concerned, there are undeniable evidences of the Scripture doctrine, that he succours the miserable, and hears the groans of those who under the pressure of injustice implore his aid; that he therefore executes his judgments, when the complaints of the poor arise to him, though they are unworthy of the least favourable attention. For how often, by punishing the cruelty, rapine, violence, lust, and other crimes of the impious, by restraining their audacity and fury, and even subverting their tyrannical power, hath he manifestly assisted the victims of unrighteous oppression, though they have been beating the air with supplications to an unknown God? And one of the Psalmists clearly teaches that some prayers are not ineffectual, which nevertheless do not penetrate into heaven by faith. (s) For he collects those prayers which necessity naturally extorts from unbelievers as well as from the faithful, but to which the event shews God to be propitious. Does he by such condescension testify that they are acceptable to him? No; he designs to amplify or illustrate his mercy by this circumstance, that even the requests of unbelievers are not refused; and likewise to stimulate his true worshippers to greater diligence in prayer, while they see that even the lamentations of the profane are not unattended with advantage. Yet there is no reason why the faithful should deviate from the rule given them by God, or envy unbelievers, as though they had made some great acquisition when they have obtained the object of their wishes. In this manner we have said that the Lord was moved by the hypocritical penitence of Ahab, in order to prove by this example how ready he is to grant the prayers of his own elect, when they seek reconciliation with him by true conver-

(s) Psalm cvii.

sion. Therefore in the Psalms he expostulates with the Jews, because, after having experienced his propitiousness to their prayers, they had almost immediately returned to their native perverseness. (*t*) It is evident also from the history of the Judges, that whenever they wept, though their tears were hypocritical, yet they were delivered from the hands of their enemies. As the Lord, therefore, "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good" (*v*) promiscuously, so he despises not the lamentations of those, whose cause is just, and whose afflictions deserve relief. At the same time his attention to them is no more connected with salvation, than his furnishing food to the despisers of his goodness. The question relative to Abraham and Samuel is attended with more difficulty; the former of whom prayed for the inhabitants of Sodom without any Divine direction, and the latter for Saul even contrary to a plain prohibition. (*u*) The same is the case of Jeremiah, who deprecated the destruction of the city. (*w*) For though they suffered a repulse, yet it seems harsh to deny them to have been under the influence of faith. But the modest reader will, I hope, be satisfied with this solution; that mindful of the general principles by which God enjoins them to be merciful even to the unworthy, they were not entirely destitute of faith, though in a particular instance their opinion may have disappointed them. Augustine has somewhere this judicious observation; "How do the saints pray in faith, when they implore of God that which is contrary to his decrees? It is because they pray according to his will, not that hidden and immutable will, but that with which he inspires them, that he may hear them in a different way, as he wisely discriminates." This is an excellent remark; because, according to his incomprehensible designs, he so regulates the events of things, that the prayers of the saints, which contain a mixture of faith and error, are not in vain. Yet this no more affords an example for imitation, than a sufficient plea to excuse the saints themselves, whom I admit to have transgressed the bounds of duty. Wherefore when no certain promise can be found, we should present our supplications

(*t*) Psalm cvi. 39.(*v*) Matt. v. 45.(*u*) Gen. xviii. 23. 1 Sam. xv. 11.(*w*) Jer. xxxii. 16, &c.(*x*) Psalm vii. 6.

to God in a conditional way. Which is implied in this petition of David; "Awake to the judgment that thou hast commanded:" (x) because he suggests that he was directed by a particular revelation to pray for a temporal blessing.

XVI. It will also be of use to remark, that the things I have delivered concerning the four rules for praying aright, are not required by God with such extreme rigour as to cause the rejection of all prayers, in which he does not find a perfection of faith or repentance, united with ardent zeal and well-regulated desires. We have said, that although prayer is a familiar intercourse between God and pious men, yet reverence and modesty must be preserved, that we may not give a loose to all our wishes, nor even in our desires exceed the Divine permission; and to prevent the majesty of God being lessened in our view, our minds must be raised to a pure and holy veneration of him. This no man has ever performed with the purity required; for, to say nothing of the multitude, how many complaints of David savour of intemperance of spirit: not that he would designedly remonstrate with God, or murmur at his judgments; but he faints in consequence of his infirmity, and finds no better consolation than to pour his sorrows into the Divine bosom. Moreover, God bears with our lispings, and pardons our ignorance, whenever any inconsiderate expressions escape us; and certainly without this indulgence there could be no freedom of prayer. But though it was David's intention to submit himself wholly to the Divine will, and his patience in prayer was equal to his desire of obtaining his requests; yet we sometimes perceive the appearance and ebullition of turbulent passions, very inconsistent with the first rule we have laid down. We may discover particularly from the conclusion of the thirty-ninth Psalm, with what vehemence of grief this holy man was hurried away beyond all the bounds of propriety: "O spare me (says he) before I go hence, and be no more." (y) One might be ready to say, that the man being in despair desires nothing but the removal of God's hand, that he may putrefy in his own iniquities and miseries. He does not intend to rush into intemperance of language, or, as is usual with the reprobate, desire

(x) Psalm vii. 6.

(y) Psalm xxxix. 13.

God to depart from him; he only complains that he cannot bear the Divine wrath. In these temptations, also, the saints often drop petitions, not sufficiently conformable to the rule of God's word, and without due reflection on what is right and proper. All prayers polluted with these blemishes deserve to be rejected; yet if the saints mourn, correct themselves, and return to themselves again, God forgives them. Thus they offend likewise against the second rule; because they frequently have to contend with their own indifference; nor do their poverty and misery sufficiently incite them to seriousness of devotion. Now their minds frequently wander, and are almost absorbed in vanity: and they also need pardon in this respect, lest languid, or mutilated, or interrupted and desultory prayers should meet with a repulse. God hath naturally impressed the minds of men with a conviction that prayers require to be attended with an elevation of heart. Hence the ceremony of elevating the hands, as before observed, which has been common in all ages and nations, and still continues: but where is the person who, while lifting up the hands, is not conscious of dulness, because his heart cleaves to the earth? As to praying for the remission of sins, though none of the faithful omit this article, yet they who have been truly engaged in prayers, perceive that they scarcely offer the tenth part of the sacrifices mentioned by David; "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (z) Thus they have always to pray for a twofold forgiveness; both because they are conscious of many transgressions, with which they are not so deeply affected as to be sufficiently displeased with themselves, and as they are enabled to advance in repentance and the fear of God, humbled with just sorrow for their offences, they deprecate the vengeance of the Judge. But above all, the weakness or imperfection of their faith would vitiate the prayers of the faithful, were it not for the Divine assistance: but we need not wonder that this defect is forgiven by God, who frequently exercises his children with severe discipline, as if he fully designed to annihilate their faith. It is a very sharp temptation, when the faithful are constrained

to cry, "How long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?" (a) as though even their prayers were so many provocations of Divine wrath. So when Jeremiah says, "God shutteth out my prayer," (b) he was undoubtedly agitated with severe trouble. Innumerable examples of this kind occur in the Scriptures, from which it appears that the faith of the saints is often mingled and agitated with doubts, so that amidst the exercises of faith and hope, they nevertheless betray some remains of unbelief: but since they cannot attain all that is to be wished, it becomes them to be increasingly diligent, in order that, correcting their faults, they may daily make nearer approaches to the perfect rule of prayer, and at the same time to consider into what an abyss of evils they must have been plunged, who even in their very remedies contract new diseases; since there is no prayer which God would not justly disdain, if he did not overlook the blemishes with which they are all deformed. I mention these things, not that the faithful may securely forgive themselves any thing sinful; but that by severely correcting themselves, they may strive to surmount these obstacles; and that, notwithstanding the endeavours of Satan to obstruct them in all their ways, with a view to prevent them from praying, they may nevertheless break through all opposition, certainly persuaded, that, though they experience many impediments, yet God is pleased with their efforts, and approves of their prayers, provided they strenuously aim at that which they do not immediately attain.

XVII. But since there is no one of the human race worthy to present himself to God, and to enter into his presence; our heavenly Father himself, to deliver us at once from shame and fear, which might justly depress all our minds, has given us his Son Jesus Christ our Lord to be our Advocate and Mediator with him; (c) introduced by whom we may boldly approach him, confident, with such an Intercessor, that nothing we ask in his name will be denied us, as nothing can be denied to him by his Father. And to this must be referred all that we have hitherto advanced concerning faith; because, as the promise recommends Christ to us as the Mediator, so, unless our hope

(a) Psalm lxxx. 4.

(b) Lam. iii. 8.

(c) 1 Tim. ii. 5. 1 John ii. 1.

of success depend on him, it deprives itself of all the benefit of prayer. For as soon as we reflect on the terrible majesty of God, we cannot but be exceedingly afraid, and driven away from him by a consciousness of our unworthiness, till we discover Christ as the Mediator, who changes the throne of dreadful glory into a throne of grace: as the apostle also exhorts us to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (*d*) And as there is a rule given for calling upon God, as well as a promise that they shall be heard who call upon him; so we are particularly enjoined to invoke him in the name of Christ; and we have an express promise, that what we ask in his name we shall obtain. "Hitherto (says he) ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." (*e*) Hence it is plain beyond all controversy, that they who call upon God in any other name than that of Christ, are guilty of a contumacious neglect of his precepts, and a total disregard of his will; and that they have no promise of any success. For, as Paul says of Christ, "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen:" that is, are confirmed and fulfilled. (*f*)

XVIII. And we must carefully remark the circumstance of the time when Christ commands his disciples to apply to his intercession, which was to be after his ascension to heaven; "At that day (says he) ye shall ask in my name." It is certain that from the beginning no prayers had been heard but for the sake of the Mediator. For this reason the Lord had appointed in the law, that the priest alone should enter the sanctuary, bearing on his shoulders the names of the tribes of Israel, and the same number of precious stones before his breast; but that the people should stand without in the court, and there unite their prayers with those of the priest. (*g*) The use of the sacrifice was to render their prayers available. The meaning, therefore, of that shadowy ceremony of the law was, that we are all banished from the presence of God; and therefore need a mediator to appear in our name, to bear us on his shoulders, and

(*d*) Heb. iv. 16. (*e*) John xvi. 24, 26. xiv. 13. (*f*) 2 Cor. i. 20. (*g*) Exod. xxviii.

bind us to his breast, that we may be heard in his person; and moreover, that the sprinkling of his blood purifies our prayers, which have been asserted to be otherwise never free from defilement. And we see that the saints, when they wished to obtain any thing by prayer, founded their hope on the sacrifices; because they knew them to be the confirmations of all their prayers. David says, "The Lord remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt-sacrifice." (*h*) Hence we conclude, that God hath from the beginning been appeased by the intercession of Christ, so as to accept the devotions of the faithful. Why then does Christ assign a new period, when his disciples shall begin to pray in his name, but because this grace, being now become more illustrious, deserves to be more strongly recommended to us? In this same sense he had just before said, "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask." (*d*) Not that they were totally unacquainted with the office of the Mediator (since all the Jews were instructed in these first principles), but because they did not yet clearly understand that Christ on his ascension to heaven would be more evidently the advocate of the Church than he was before. Therefore, to console their sorrow for his absence with some signal advantage, he claims the character of an advocate, and teaches them that they have hitherto wanted the principal benefit, which it shall be given them to enjoy, when they shall call upon God with greater freedom in a reliance on his intercession; as the apostle says that this new way is consecrated by his blood. (*e*) So much the more inexcusable is our perverseness, unless we embrace with the greatest alacrity such an inestimable benefit, which is particularly destined for us.

XIX. Moreover, since he is the only way of access by which we are permitted to approach God, to them who deviate from this road, and desert this entrance, there remains no other way of access to God, nor any thing on his throne but wrath, judgment, and terror. Finally, since the Father hath appointed him to be our Head and Leader, they who in any respect decline or turn aside from him, endeavour as far as they can to deface and obliterate a character impressed by God. Thus Christ is

(*h*) Psalm **xx.** 3.(*d*) John **xvi.** 24.(*e*) Heb. **x.** 20.

appointed as the one Mediator, by whose intercession the Father is rendered propitious and favourable to us. The saints have likewise their intercessions, in which they mutually commend each others' interests to God, and which are mentioned by the apostle: (*f*) but these are so far from detracting any thing from the intercession of Christ, that they are entirely dependent on it. For as they arise from the affection of love, reciprocally felt by us towards each other as members of one body, so likewise they are referred to the unity of the Head. Being made also in the name of Christ, what are they but a declaration, that no man can be benefited by any prayers at all, independently of Christ's intercession? And as the intercession of Christ is no objection to our mutually pleading for each other, in our prayers in the Church; so let it be considered as a certain maxim, that all the intercessions of the whole Church should be directed to that principal one. We ought to beware of ingratitude particularly on this head, because God, pardoning our unworthiness, not only permits us to pray each one for himself, but even admits us as intercessors for one another. For, since God hath constituted those who richly deserve to be rejected, advocates of his Church, if they should privately pray each for himself alone, what pride would it betray to abuse this liberality to obscure the honour of Christ?

XX. Now the cavil of the sophists is quite frivolous, that Christ is the Mediator of redemption, but believers of intercession: as if Christ, after performing a temporary mediation, had left to his servants that which is eternal and shall never die. They who detract so diminutive a portion of honour from him, treat him doubtless very favourably. But the Scripture, with the simplicity of which a pious man, forsaking these impostors, ought to be contented, speaks very differently; for when John says, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ:" (*g*) does he only mean that he has been heretofore an advocate for us, or does he not rather ascribe to him a perpetual intercession? What is intended by the assertion of Paul, that he "is even at the right hand of God, and also maketh intercession for us?" (*h*) And when he elsewhere calls him the

(*f*) Ephes. vi. 18, 19. 1 Tim. ii. 1. (*g*) 1 John ii. 1. (*h*) Rom. viii. 34.

“one Mediator between God and man,” does he not refer to prayers, which he has mentioned just before? (i) For having first asserted that intercessions should be made for all men, he immediately adds, in confirmation of that idea, that all have one God and one Mediator. Consistent with which is the explanation of Augustine, when he thus expresses himself: “Christian men in their prayers mutually recommend each other to the Divine regard. That person, for whom no one intercedes, while he intercedes for all, is the true and only Mediator. The apostle Paul, though a principal member under the head, yet because he was a member of the body of Christ, and knew the great and true High Priest of the Church had entered, not typically into the recesses within the vail, the holy of holies, but truly and really into the interior recesses of heaven, into a sanctuary not emblematical but eternal,—Paul, I say, recommends himself to the prayers of the faithful. Neither does he make himself a mediator between God and the people, but exhorts all the members of the body of Christ mutually to pray for one another; since the members have a mutual solicitude for each other; and if one member suffers, the rest sympathize with it. And so should the mutual prayers of all the members, who are still engaged in the labours of the present state, ascend on each other’s behalf to the Head, who is gone before them into heaven, and who is the propitiation for our sins. For if Paul were a mediator, the other apostles would likewise sustain the same character; and so there would be many mediators; and Paul’s argument could not be supported, when he says, ‘For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; in whom we also are one, if we keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’ Again in another place, ‘But if you seek a priest, he is above the heavens, where he now intercedes for you, who died for you on earth.’ Yet we do not dream that he intercedes for us in suppliant prostration at the Father’s feet; but we apprehend, with the apostle, that he appears in the presence of God for us in such a manner, that the virtue of his death avails as a perpetual intercession for us; yet so as that being entered into the heavenly

(i) 1 Tim. ii. 5.

sanctuary, he continually, till the consummation of all things, presents to God the prayers of his people, who remain as it were at a distance in the court."

XXI. With respect to the saints who are dead in the flesh but live in Christ, if we attribute any intercession to them, let us not imagine that they have any other way of praying to God than by Christ, who is the only way, or that their prayers are accepted by God in any other name. Therefore, since the Scripture calls us away from all others to Christ alone; since it is the will of our heavenly Father to gather together all things in him; it would be a proof of great stupidity, not to say insanity, to be so desirous of procuring an admission by the saints, as to be seduced from him, without whom they have no access themselves. But that this has been practised in some ages, and is now practised wherever Popery prevails, who can deny? Their merits are frequently obtruded to conciliate the Divine favour; and in general Christ is totally neglected, and God is addressed through their names. Is not this transferring to them that office of exclusive intercession, which we have before asserted to be peculiar to Christ? Again, who, either angel or demon, ever uttered to any of the human race a syllable concerning such an intercession as they pretend? for the Scripture is perfectly silent respecting any such thing. What reason then was there then for its invention? Certainly when the human mind thus seeks assistances for itself, in which it is not warranted by the word of God, it evidently betrays its want of faith. Now if we appeal to the consciences of all the advocates for the intercession of saints, we shall find that the only cause of it is, an anxiety in their minds, as if Christ could fail of success, or be too severe in this business. By which perplexity they, in the first place, dishonour Christ, and rob him of the character of the only Mediator, which, as it has been given by the Father as his peculiar prerogative, ought therefore not to be transferred to any other. And by this very conduct they obscure the glory of his nativity, and frustrate the benefit of his cross; in a word, they divest and defraud him of the praise which is due to him for all his actions and all his sufferings; since the end of them all is, that he may really be, and be accounted, the sole Mediator. They at the same time reject the

goodness of God, who exhibits himself as their Father; for he is not a father to them, unless they acknowledge Christ as their brother. Which they plainly deny, unless they believe themselves to be the objects of his fraternal affection, than which nothing is more mild or tender. Wherefore the Scripture offers him alone to us, sends us to him, and fixes us in him. "He," says Ambrose, "is our mouth, with which we address the Father; our eye, by which we behold the Father; our hand, by which we present ourselves to the Father. Without whose mediation, neither we, nor any of all the saints have the least intercourse with God." If they reply, that the public prayers in the churches are finished by this conclusion, "through Christ our Lord," it is a frivolous subterfuge: because the intercession of Christ is not less profaned when it is confounded with the prayers and merits of the dead, than if it were wholly omitted and the dead alone mentioned. Besides, in all their litanies, both verse and prose, where no honour is ascribed to dead saints, there is no mention of Christ.

XXII. But their folly rises to such a pitch, that we have here a striking view of the genius of superstition, which, when it hath once shaken off the rein, places in general no limits to its excursions. For after men had begun to regard the intercession of saints, they by degrees gave to each his particular attributes, so that sometimes one, sometimes another might be invoked as intercessor, according to the difference of the cases: then they chose each his particular saint, to whose protection they committed themselves, as to the care of tutelary gods. Thus they not only set up (as the prophet anciently accused Israel) gods according to the number of their cities,^(k) but even according to the multitude of persons. But since the saints refer all their desires solely to the will of God, and observe it, and acquiesce in it; he must entertain foolish and carnal, and even degrading thoughts of them, who ascribes to them any other prayer, than that in which they pray for the advent of the kingdom of God: very remote from which is what they pretend concerning them, that every one of them is disposed by a private affection more particularly to regard his own worshippers.

(k) Jer. ii. 28. xi. 13.

At length multitudes fell even into horrid sacrilege, by invoking them, not as subordinate promoters, but as principal agents, in their salvation. See how low wretched mortals fall, when they wander from their lawful station, the word of God. I omit the grosser monstrosities of impiety, for which, though they render them detestable to God, angels, and men, they do not yet feel either shame or grief. Prostrate before the statue or picture of Barbara, Catharine, and others, they mutter *Pater Noster*, "Our Father." This madness the pastors are so far from endeavouring to remedy or to restrain, that, allured by the charms of lucre, they approve and applaud it. But though they attempt to remove from themselves the odium of so foul a crime; yet what plea will they urge in defence of this? that Eligius and Medardus are supplicated to look down from heaven on their servants, and to assist them? and the holy Virgin to command her Son to grant our petitions? It was anciently forbidden at the council of Carthage, that at the altar any prayers should be made directly to the saints: and it is probable that, when those holy men could not wholly subdue the force of depraved custom, they imposed this restraint, that the public prayers might not be deformed by this phrase, "Saint Peter, pray for us." But to how much greater lengths of diabolical absurdity have they proceeded, who hesitate not to transfer to dead men what exclusively belongs to God and Christ?

XXIII. But when they attempt to make this intercession appear to be founded on the authority of Scripture, they labour in vain. We frequently read, they say, of the prayers of angels; and not only so, but the prayers of the faithful are said to be carried by their hands into the presence of God. But if they would compare saints deceased to angels, they ought to prove that they are the ministering spirits who are delegated to superintend the concerns of our salvation, whose province it is to keep us in all our ways, who surround us, who advise and comfort us, who watch over us; all of which offices are committed to angels, but not to departed saints. (1) How preposterously they included dead saints with angels, fully appears

(1) Heb. i. 14. Psalm xci. 11. xxxiv. 7.

from so many different functions, by which the Scripture distinguishes some from others. No man will presume, without previous permission, to act the part of an advocate before an earthly judge: whence then have worms so great a license to obtrude on God as intercessors those who are not recorded to have been appointed to that office? God hath been pleased to appoint the angels to attend to our salvation, and the Church is to them a theatre, in which they admire the various and “manifold wisdom of God.” (m) Those who transfer to others that which is peculiar to them, certainly confound and pervert the order established by God, which ought to be inviolable. With equal dexterity they proceed to cite other testimonies. God said to Jeremiah, “Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people.” (n) How, they say, could he thus have spoken concerning persons deceased, unless he knew that they were accustomed to intercede for the living? But I, on the contrary, deduce this conclusion, That since it appears that neither Moses nor Samuel interceded for the Israelites, there was then no intercession of the dead. For who of the saints must we believe to be concerned for the salvation of the people, when this ceases to be the case with Moses, who far surpassed all others in this respect while alive? But if they pursue such minute subtleties, that the dead intercede for the living, because the Lord hath said, “Though they interceded;” I shall argue with far greater plausibility, in this manner, In the people’s extreme necessity, no intercession was made by Moses, of whom it is said, Though he interceded. Therefore it is highly probable, that no intercession is made by any other, since they are all so far from possessing the gentleness, kindness, and paternal solicitude of Moses. This is indeed the consequence of their cavilling, that they are wounded with the same weapons with which they thought themselves admirably defended. But it is very ridiculous, that a plain sentence should be so distorted; only because the Lord declares that he will not spare the crimes of the people, even though their cause had been pleaded by Moses or Samuel, to whose prayers he had shewn himself so very pro-

(m) Ephes. iii. 10.

(n) Jer. xv. 1.

pitious. This idea is very clearly deduced from a similar passage of Ezekiel. "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in the land, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God:" (*o*) where he undoubtedly meant to signify, if two of them should return to life again: for the third was then alive, namely, Daniel, who is well known to have given an incomparable specimen of his piety, even in the flower of his youth. Let us then leave them, whom the Scripture clearly shews to have finished their course. Therefore Paul, when speaking of David, does not say that he assists posterity by his prayers, but only that "he served his own generation." (*p*)

XXIV. They farther object; Shall we then divest them of every benevolent wish, who through the whole course of their lives breathed only benevolence and mercy? Truly, as I do not wish too curiously to inquire into their actions or thoughts, so it is by no means probable that they are agitated by the impulse of particular wishes, but rather that with fixed and permanent desires they aspire after the kingdom of God; which consists no less in the perdition of the impious, than in the salvation of the faithful. If this be true, their charity also is comprehended within the communion of the body of Christ, and extends no farther than the nature of the communion permits. But though I grant that in this respect they pray for us, yet they do not therefore relinquish their own repose, to be distracted with earthly cares; and much less are they therefore to be the objects of our invocation. Neither is it a necessary consequence of this, that they must imitate the conduct of men on earth by mutually praying for one another. For this conduces to the cultivation of charity among them, while they divide as it were between them, and reciprocally bear, their mutual necessities. And in this indeed they act according to God's precept, and are not destitute of his promise; which two are always the principal points in prayer. No such considerations have any relation to the dead; whom when the Lord hath removed from our society, he hath left us no intercourse with them, nor them indeed, as far as our conjectures can reach, any with us. (*q*) But if any

(*o*) Ezek. xiv. 14.(*p*) Acts xiii. 36.(*q*) Eccles. ix. 5, 6.

one plead, that they cannot but retain the same charity towards us, as they are united with us by the same faith: yet who has revealed that they have ears long enough to reach our voices, and eyes so perspicacious as to watch over our necessities? They talk in the schools of I know not what refulgence of the Divine countenance irradiating them, in which, as in a mirror, they behold from heaven the affairs of men. But to affirm this, especially with the presumption with which they dare to assert it, what is it but an attempt, by the infatuated dreams of our own brains, forcibly to penetrate into the secret appointments of God, without the authority of his word, and to trample the Scripture under our feet? which so frequently pronounces our carnal wisdom to be hostile to the wisdom of God; totally condemns the vanity of our mind; and directs all our reason to be laid in the dust, and the Divine will to be the sole object of our regard.

XXV. The other testimonies of Scripture which they adduce in defence of this false doctrine, they distort with the greatest perverseness. But Jacob (they say) prays that his own name, and the name of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac, might be named on his posterity. (*r*) Let us first inquire the form of this naming, or calling on their names, among the Israelites: for they do not invoke their fathers to assist them; but they beseech God to remember his servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Their example, therefore, is no vindication of those who address the saints themselves. But as these stupid mortals understand neither what it is to name the name of Jacob, nor for what reason it should be named; we need not wonder that they so childishly err even in the form itself. This phraseology more than once occurs in the Scriptures. For Isaiah says, that the name of the husband is "called upon" the wife who lives under his care and protection. The naming or calling, therefore, of the name of Abraham upon the Israelites, consists in their deducing their genealogy from him, and revering and celebrating his memory as their great progenitor. Neither is Jacob actuated by a solicitude for perpetuating the celebrity of his name, but by a knowledge that all the happiness of his posterity consisted

in the inheritance of that covenant which God had made with him: and perceiving that this would be the greatest of all blessings to them, he prays that they may be numbered among his children; which is only transmitting to them the succession of the covenant. They on their part, when they introduce the mention of this in their prayers, do not recur to the intercessions of the dead, but put the Lord in remembrance of his covenant, in which their most merciful Father hath engaged to be propitious and beneficent to them, for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. How little the saints depended in any other sense on the merits of their fathers, is evinced by the public voice of the Church in the prophet; "Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer." (s) And when they thus express themselves, they add at the same time, "O Lord, return, for thy servants' sake:" yet not entertaining a thought of any intercession, but adverting to the blessing of the covenant. But now since we have the Lord Jesus, in whose hand the eternal covenant of mercy is not only made but confirmed to us: whose name should we rather plead in our prayers? And since these good doctors contend that the patriarchs are in these words represented as intercessors, I wish to be informed by them, why in such a vast multitude, no place, not even the lowest among them, can be allotted to Abraham, the father of the Church? From what vile source they derive their advocates, is well known. Let them answer me by proving it right, that Abraham, whom God hath preferred to all others, and elevated to the highest degree of honour, should be neglected and suppressed. The truth is, that since this practice was unknown in the ancient Church, they thought proper, in order to conceal its novelty, to be silent respecting the ancient fathers; as though the difference of names were a valid excuse for a recent and corrupt custom. But the objection urged by some, that God is entreated to have mercy on the people for the sake of David, is so far from supporting their error, that it is a decisive refutation of it. For if we consider the character sustained by David, he is selected from the whole company of the saints, that God

may fulfil the covenant which he made with him. So that it refers to the covenant rather than to the person, and contains a figurative declaration of the sole intercession of Christ. For it is certain that what was peculiar to David, as being a type of Christ, is inapplicable to any others.

XXVI. But it seems that some are influenced by the frequent declarations which we read, that the prayers of the saints are heard. Why? Truly because they have prayed. "They cried unto thee," says the Psalmist, "and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded." (*t*) Therefore, let us likewise pray after their example, that we may obtain a similar audience. But these men preposterously argue, that none will be heard but such as have been once already heard. How much more properly does James say? "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." (*u*) What? does he infer any peculiar privilege of Elias, to which we should have recourse? Not at all: but he shews the perpetual efficacy of pure and pious prayers, to exhort us to pray in a similar manner. For we put a mean construction on the promptitude and benignity of God in hearing them, unless we be encouraged by such instances to a firmer reliance on his promises; in which he promises to hear, not one or two, or even a few, but all who call upon his name. And this ignorance is so much the less excusable, because they appear almost professedly to disregard so many testimonies of Scripture. David experienced frequent deliverances by the Divine power: was it that he might arrogate it to himself, in order to deliver us by his interposition? He makes some very different declarations: "The righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me." (*x*) Again, "They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." (*y*) The Psalms contain many such prayers, in which he implores God to grant his requests from this consideration, that the righteous

(*t*) Psalm xxii. 5.

(*x*) Psalm cxlii. 7.

(*u*) James v. 17, 18.

(*y*) Psalm xxxiv. 5, 6.

may not be put to shame, but may be encouraged by his example to entertain a good hope. Let us be contented at present with one instance; "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found:" (z) a text which I have the more readily cited, because the hireling and cavilling advocates of Popery have not been ashamed to plead it to prove the intercession of the dead. As though David had any other design than to shew the effect which would proceed from the Divine clemency and goodness when his prayers should be heard. And in this respect it must be maintained, that an experience of the grace of God, both to ourselves and to others, affords no small assistance to confirm our faith in his promises. I do not recite numerous passages, where he proposes to himself the past blessings of God as a ground of present and future confidence, since they will naturally occur to those who peruse the Psalms. Jacob by his example had long before taught the same lesson; "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands." (a) He mentions the promise indeed, but not alone; he likewise adds the effect, that he may in future confide with the greater boldness in the continuance of the Divine goodness towards him. For God is not like mortals, who grow weary of their liberality or whose wealth is exhausted; but is to be estimated by his own nature, as is judiciously done by David, when he says; "Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." (b) After ascribing to him the praise of his salvation, he adds, that he is a God of truth: because, unless he were perpetually and uniformly consistent with himself, there could not be derived from his benefits a sufficient argument for confiding in him, and praying to him. But when we know that every act of assistance, which he affords us, is a specimen and proof of his goodness and faithfulness, we shall have no reason to fear lest our hopes be confounded or our expectations disappointed.

XXVII. Let us conclude this argument in the following manner. Since the Scripture represents the principal part of

(z) Psalm xxxii. 6.

(a) Gen. xxxii. 10.

(b) Psalm xxxi. 5.

Divine worship to be an invocation of God, as he refuses all sacrifices, and requires of us this duty of piety, no prayer can without evident sacrilege be directed to any other. Wherefore also the Psalmist says; "If we have stretched out our hands to a strange god; shall not God search this out?" (c) Besides, since God will only be invoked in faith, and expressly commands prayers to be conformed to the rule of his word; finally, since faith founded on the word is the source of true prayer: as soon as the least deviation is made from the word, there must necessarily be an immediate corruption of prayer. But it has been already shewn, that if the whole Scripture be consulted, this honour is there claimed for God alone. With respect to the office of intercession, we have also seen, that it is peculiar to Christ, and that no prayer is acceptable to God, unless it be sanctified by this Mediator. And though believers mutually pray to God for their brethren, we have proved that this derogates nothing from the sole intercession of Christ; because they all commend both themselves and others to God in a reliance upon it. Moreover we have argued, that this is injudiciously applied to the dead, of whom we no where read that they are commanded to pray for us. The Scripture frequently exhorts us to the mutual performance of this duty for each other; but concerning the dead there is not even a syllable: and James, by connecting these two things, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another," tacitly excludes the dead. (d) Wherefore, to condemn this error, this one reason is sufficient, that right prayer originates in faith, and that faith is produced by hearing the word of God, where there is no mention of this fictitious intercession; for the fomerity of superstition hath chosen itself advocates, who were not of Divine appointment. For whilst the Scripture abounds with many forms of prayer, there is not to be found an example of this advocacy, without which the Papists believe there can be no prayer at all. Besides, it is evident that this superstition has arisen from a want of faith, because they either were not content with Christ as their intercessor, or entirely denied him this glory. The latter of these is easily proved from their impudence; for they

(c) Psalm xliv. 20, 21.

(d) James v. 16.

adduce no argument more valid to shew that we need the mediation of the saints, than when they object that we are unworthy of familiar access to God. Which indeed we acknowledge to be strictly true; but we thence conclude, that they rob Christ of every thing, who consider his intercession as unavailing without the assistance of George and Hippolytus, and other such phantasms.

XXVIII. But though prayer is properly restricted to wishes and petitions, yet there is so great an affinity between petition and thanksgiving, that they may be justly comprehended under the same name. For the species which Paul enumerates, fall under the first member of this division. In requests and petitions we pour out our desires before God, imploring those things which tend to the propagation of his glory and the illustration of his name, as well as those benefits which conduce to our advantage. In thanksgiving we celebrate his beneficence towards us with due praises, acknowledging all the blessings we have received as the gifts of his liberality. Therefore David has connected these two parts together; "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." (e) The Scripture, not without reason, enjoins us the continual use of both: for we have elsewhere said that our want is so great, and experience itself proclaims that we are molested and oppressed on every side with such numerous and great perplexities, that we all have sufficient cause for unceasing sighs, and groans, and ardent supplications to God. For though they enjoy a freedom from adversity, yet the guilt of their sins, and the innumerable assaults of temptation ought to stimulate even the most eminent saints to pray for relief. But of the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving there can be no interruption, without guilt; since God ceases not to accumulate on us his various benefits according to our respective cases, in order to constrain us, inactive and sluggish as we are, to the exercise of gratitude. Finally, we are almost overwhelmed with such great and copious effusions of his beneficence; we are surrounded, whithersoever we turn our eyes, by such numerous and amazing miracles of his hand, that we never want matter of praise and

thanksgiving. And to be a little more explicit on this point, since all our hopes and all our help are in God (which has already been sufficiently proved) so that we cannot enjoy prosperity, either in our persons or in any of our affairs, without his benediction; it becomes us assiduously to commend to him ourselves and all our concerns. Farther, whatever we think, speak, or act, let all our thoughts, words, and actions be under his direction, subject to his will, and finally in hope of his assistance. For the curse of God is denounced on all, who deliberate and decide on any enterprise in a reliance on themselves or on any other, who engage in or attempt to begin any undertaking independently of his will, and without invoking his aid. And since it has already been several times observed, that he is justly honoured when he is acknowledged to be the Author of all blessings; it thence follows that they should all be so received from his hand, as to be attended with unceasing thanksgiving; and that there is no other proper method of using the benefits, which flow to us from his goodness, but by continual acknowledgments of his praise, and unceasing expressions of our gratitude. For Paul, when he declares that they are “sanctified by the word of God and prayer,” at the same time implies, that they are not at all holy and pure to us without the word and prayer: (*f*) the word being metonymically used to denote faith. Wherefore David, after experiencing the goodness of the Lord, beautifully declares; “He hath put a new song in my mouth:” (*g*) in which he certainly implies that we are guilty of a criminal silence, if we omit to praise him for any benefit; since in every blessing he bestows on us, he gives us additional cause to bless his name. Thus also Isaiah, proclaiming the unparalleled grace of God, exhorts the faithful to a new and uncommon song. (*h*) In which sense David elsewhere says; “O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.” (*i*) Hezekiah likewise, and Jonah, declare that the end of their deliverance shall be to sing the Divine goodness in the temple. (*k*) David prescribes the same general rule for all the saints. “What shall I render (says he) unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will take the

(*f*) 1 Tim. iv. 5.(*g*) Psalm xl. 3.(*h*) Isaiah xlii. 10.(*i*) Psalm li. 15.(*k*) Isaiah xxxviii. 20. Jonah ii. 9.

cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.”(l) And this is followed by the Church in another Psalm; “Save us, O Lord our God, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise.”(m) Again, “He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord. To declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem.”(n) Moreover, whenever the faithful entreat the Lord to do any thing “for his name sake;” as they profess themselves unworthy to obtain any blessing on their own account, so they lay themselves under an obligation to thanksgiving; and promise that the Divine beneficence shall be productive of this proper effect on them, even to cause them to celebrate its fame. Thus Hosea, speaking of the future redemption of the Church, addresses the Lord; “Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.”(o) Nor do the Divine blessings only claim the praises of the tongue, but naturally conciliate our love. “I love the Lord (says David) because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.”(p) In another place also, enumerating the assistances he had experienced; “I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.”(q) Nor will any praises ever please God, but such as flow from this ardour of love. We must likewise remember the opinion of Paul, that all petitions, to which thanksgiving is not annexed, are irregular and faulty. For thus he speaks; “In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.”(r) For since moroseness, weariness, impatience, pungent sorrow and fear, impel many to mutter petitions, he enjoins such a regulation of the affections, that the faithful may cheerfully bless God, even before they have obtained their requests. If this connection ought to exist in circumstances apparently adverse, God lays us under a still more sacred obligation to sing his praises, whenever he grants us the enjoyment of our wishes. But as we have asserted that our prayers, which had otherwise been defiled, are consecrated by the intercession of Christ; so the apostle, when he exhorts us “by

(l) Psalm cxvi. 12, 13. (m) Psalm cvi. 47. (n) Psalm cii. 17, &c.

(o) Hosea xiv. 2. (p) Psalm cxvi. 1. (q) Psalm xviii. 1. (r) Phil. iv. 6.

Christ to offer the sacrifice of praise," (*s*) admonishes us that our lips are not sufficiently pure to celebrate the name of God, without the intervention of the priesthood of Christ. Whence we infer, how prodigious must be the fascination of the Papists, the majority of whom wonder that Christ is called an Advocate. This is the reason why Paul directs to "pray without ceasing," and "in every thing to give thanks:" (*t*) because he desires that all men, with all possible assiduity, at every time and in every place, and in all circumstances and affairs, may direct their prayers to God, expecting all from him, and ascribing to him the praise of all, since he affords us perpetual matter of prayer and praise.

XXIX. But this diligence in prayer, although it chiefly respects the particular and private devotions of each individual, has notwithstanding some reference also to the public services of the Church. But these cannot be unceasing, nor ought they to be conducted otherwise than according to the polity which is appointed by the common consent. This, indeed, I confess. For therefore also certain hours are fixed and prescribed, as indifferent with God, so necessary to the customs of men, that the benefit of all may be regarded, and all the affairs of the Church be administered, according to the direction of Paul, "decently and in order." (*u*) But this by no means prevents it from being the duty of every Church often to stimulate themselves to a greater frequency of prayer, and also to be inflamed with more ardent devotion on the pressure of any necessity unusually great. But the place to speak of perseverance, which is nearly allied to unceasing diligence, will be towards the end. Moreover these things afford no encouragement to those vain repetitions which Christ hath chosen to interdict us: (*x*) for he does not forbid us to pray long or frequently, or with great fervour of affection; but he forbids us to confide in our ability to extort any thing from God by stunning his ears with garrulous loquacity, as though he were to be influenced by the arts of human persuasion. For we know that hypocrites, who do not consider that they are concerned with God, are as pompous in their prayers as in a triumph. For that Pharisee, who thank-

(*s*) Heb. xiii. 15.

(*v*) 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

(*t*) 1 Thess. v. 17, 18.

(*x*) Matt. vi. 7.

ed God that he was not like other men, (y) undoubtedly flattered himself in the eyes of men, as if he wished to gain by his prayer the reputation of sanctity. Hence that *βαττολογία* (*vain repetition*) which from a similar cause at present prevails among the Papists; while some vainly consume the time by reiterating the same oraisons, and others recommend themselves among the vulgar by a tedious accumulation of words. Since this garrulity is a puerile mocking of God, we need not wonder that it is prohibited in the Church, that nothing may be heard there but what is serious and proceeds from the very heart. Very similar to this corrupt practice is another, which Christ condemns at the same time; that hypocrites, for the sake of ostentation, seek after many witnesses of their devotions, and rather pray in the market-place, than that their prayers should want the applause of the world. But as it has been already observed that the end of prayer is to elevate our minds towards God, both in a confession of his praise and in a supplication of his aid; we may learn from this, that its principal place is in the mind and heart; or rather, that prayer itself is the desire of the inmost heart, which is poured out and laid before God the searcher of hearts. Wherefore our heavenly Teacher, as has already been mentioned, when he intended to deliver the best rule respecting prayer, gave the following command; "Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." (z) For when he has dissuaded from imitating the example of hypocrites, who endeavoured by the ambitious ostentation of their prayers to gain the favour of men, he immediately adds a better direction, which is, to enter into our closet, and there to pray with the door shut. In which words, as I understand them, he has taught us to seek retirement, that we may be enabled to descend into our own hearts with all our powers of reflection, and promised us that God, whose temples our bodies ought to be, will accede to the desires of our souls. For he did not intend to deny the expediency of praying also in other places; but shews that prayer is a kind of secret thing, which lies princi-

(y) Luke xviii. 11.

(z) Matt. vi. 6.

pally in the heart, and requires a tranquillity of mind, undisturbed by all cares. It was not without reason, therefore, that the Lord himself, when he would engage in an unusual vehemence of devotion, retired to some solitary place, far from the tumult of men; but with a view to admonish us by his own example, that we ought not to neglect these helps, by which our hearts, naturally too inconstant, are more intensely fixed on the devotional exercise. But notwithstanding, as he did not refrain from praying even in the midst of a multitude, if at any time the occasion required it; so we, in all places where it may be necessary, should "lift up holy hands." (a) And so it is to be concluded, that whoever refuses to pray in the solemn assembly of the saints, he knows nothing of private prayer, either solitary or domestic. And again, that he who neglects solitary and private prayer, how sedulously soever he may frequent the public assemblies, there forms such as are mere wind, because he pays more deference to the opinion of men than to the secret judgment of God. In the mean time, that the common prayers of the Church might not sink into contempt, God anciently distinguished them by splendid titles, especially when he called the temple a "house of prayer." (b) For by this expression he taught both that the duty of prayer is a principal part of his worship, and that the temple had been erected as a standard for the faithful, in order that they might engage in it with one consent. There was also added a remarkable promise; "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed;" (c) in which words the Psalmist informs us that the prayers of the Church are never in vain, because the Lord supplies his people with perpetual matter of praise and joy. But though the legal shadows have ceased, yet since it has been the Divine will by this ceremony to maintain an unity of faith among us also, the same promise undoubtedly belongs to us, Christ having confirmed it with his own mouth, and Paul having represented it as perpetually valid.

XXX. Now as God in his word commands believers to unite in common prayers, so also it is necessary that public temples be appointed for performing them; where they who refuse to

(a) 1 Tim. ii. 8.

(b) Isaiah lvi. 7.

(c) Psalm lxxv. 1.

join with the people of God in their devotions, have no just reason for abusing this pretext, that they enter into their closets, in obedience to the Divine mandate. For he who promises to grant whatever shall be implored by two or three persons convened in his name, (*d*) proves that he is far from despising prayers offered in public; provided they be free from ostentation and a desire of human applause, and accompanied with a sincere and real affection dwelling in the secret recesses of the heart. If this be the legitimate use of temples, as it certainly is, there is need of great caution, lest we either consider them as the proper habitations of the Deity, where he may be nearer to us to hear our prayers, an idea which has begun to be prevalent for several ages; or ascribe to them I know not what imaginary sanctity, which might be supposed to render our devotions more holy in the Divine view. For, since we are ourselves the true temples of God, we must pray within ourselves, if we wish to invoke him in his holy temple. But let us, who are directed to worship the Lord “in spirit and in truth,” (*e*) without any difference of place, relinquish those gross ideas of religion to the Jews or Pagans. There was, indeed, anciently a temple dedicated, by Divine command, to the oblation of prayers and sacrifices; at that time the truth was figuratively concealed under such shadows, but now, having been plainly discovered to us, it no longer permits an exclusive attachment to any material temple. Nor, indeed, was the temple recommended to the Jews that they might enclose the Divine presence within its walls, but that they might be employed in contemplating a representation of the true temple. Therefore Isaiah and Stephen have sharply reprehended those who suppose that God dwells in any respect “in temples made with hands.” (*f*)

XXXI. Hence it is moreover clearly evident, that neither voice nor music, if used in prayer, has any validity or produces the least benefit with God, unless it proceed from the inmost desire of the heart. But they rather provoke his wrath against us, if they be only emitted from the lips and throat; since that is an abuse of his sacred name, and a derision of his majesty;

(*d*) Matt. xviii. 20. (*e*) John iv. 23. (*f*) Isaiah lxvi. 1. Acts vii. 48.

as we conclude from the words of Isaiah, which, though their meaning be more extensive, contain also a reproof of this offence: "The Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." (g) Nor do we here condemn the use of the voice, or music, but rather highly recommend them, provided they accompany the affection of the heart. For they exercise the mind in Divine meditation, and fix the attention of the heart; which by its lubricity and versatility is easily relaxed and distracted to a variety of objects, unless it be supported by various helps. Besides, as the glory of God ought in some respect to be manifested in every part of our bodies; to this service, both in singing and in speaking, it becomes us especially to addict and devote our tongues, which were created for the express purpose of declaring and celebrating the Divine praises. Nevertheless the principal use of the tongue is in the public prayers which are made in the congregations of the faithful; the design of which is, that with one common voice, and as it were with the same mouth, we may all at once proclaim the glory of God, whom we worship in one spirit and with the same faith; and this is publicly done, that all interchangeably, each one of his brother, may receive the confession of faith, and be invited and stimulated by his example.

XXXII. Now the custom of singing in churches (to speak of it by the way) not only appears to be very ancient, but that it was even used by the apostles, may be concluded from these words of Paul; "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." (h) Again to the Colossians; "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (i) For in the former passage he inculcates singing with the voice and with the heart; and in the latter he recom-

(g) Isaiah xxix. 13, 14. Matt. xv. 8, 9. (h) 1 Cor. xiv. 15. (i) Col. iii. 16.

mends spiritual songs, which may conduce to the mutual edification of the saints. Yet that it was not universal, is proved by Augustine, who relates that in the time of Ambrose, the church at Milan first adopted the practice of singing, when during the persecution of the orthodox faith by Justina, the mother of Valentinian, the people were unusually assiduous in their vigils; and that the other Western churches followed. For he had just before mentioned that this custom had been derived from the churches of the East. He signifies also, in the second book of his *Retractations*, that in his time it was received in Africa. "One Hilary (says he) who held the tribunitial office, took every opportunity of loading with malicious censures the custom which was then introduced at Carthage, that hymns from the Book of Psalms should be sung at the altar, either before the oblation, or while that which had been offered was distributed to the people. In obedience to the commands of my brethren, I answered him." And certainly if music be attempered to that gravity which becomes the presence of God and of angels, it adds a dignity and grace to sacred actions, and is very efficacious in exciting the mind to a true concern and ardour of devotion. Yet great caution is necessary, that the ears be not more attentive to the modulation of the notes, than the mind to the spiritual import of the words. With which danger Augustine confesses himself to have been so affected, as sometimes to have wished for the observance of the custom instituted by Athanasius, who directed that the reader should sound the words with such a gentle inflexion of voice, as would be more nearly allied to rehearsing than to singing. But when he recollected the great benefit which himself had received from singing, he inclined to the other side. With the observance, therefore, of this limitation, it is without doubt an institution of great solemnity and usefulness. As on the reverse, whatever music is composed only to please and delight the ear, it is unbecoming of the majesty of the Church, and cannot but be highly displeasing to God.

XXXIII. Hence also it plainly appears, that public prayers are to be composed, not in Greek among the Latins, nor in Latin among the French or English, as has hitherto been universally practised; but in the vernacular tongue, which may be

generally understood by the whole congregation; for it ought to be conducted to the edification of the whole Church, to whom not the least benefit can result from sounds which they do not understand. But they who disregard the voice both of charity and of humanity, ought at least to discover some little respect for the authority of Paul, whose words are free from all ambiguity: "When thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified." (*k*) Who, then, can sufficiently wonder at the unbridled license of the Papists, who, notwithstanding this apostolic caution against it, are not afraid to bellow their verbose prayers in a foreign language, in which they neither sometimes understand a syllable themselves, nor wish a syllable to be understood by others. But Paul directs to a different practice; "What is it then? (says he) I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." (*l*) Signifying by the word *spirit* the peculiar gift of tongues, which was abused by some of its possessors, when they separated it from understanding. Thus it must be fully admitted, that both in public and in private prayer, the tongue unaccompanied by the heart cannot but be highly displeasing to God: and likewise that the mind ought to be incited in the ardour of meditation to rise to a much higher elevation than can ever be attained by the expression of the tongue. Lastly, that the tongue is indeed not necessary to private prayer, any further than as the mind is insufficient to arouse itself, or as the vehemence of its emotions irresistibly carries the tongue along with them. For though some of the best prayers are not vocal, yet it is very common for the tongue to break forth into sounds, and the other members into various gestures, without the least ostentation. Hence the uncertain muttering of Hannah, (*m*) somewhat similar to which is experienced by the saints in all ages, when they break forth into abrupt and imperfect sounds. The

(*k*) 1 Cor. xiv. 16, 17.(*l*) 1 Cor. xiv. 15.(*m*) 1 Sam. i. 13.

corporeal gestures usually observed in prayer, such as kneeling and uncovering the head, are customs designed to increase our reverence of God.

XXXIV. Now we must learn not only a certain rule, but also the form of praying; even that which our heavenly Father hath given us by his beloved Son: (*n*) in which we may recognise his infinite goodness and clemency. For beside advising and exhorting us to seek him in all our necessities, as children, whenever they are afflicted with any distress, are accustomed to have recourse to the protection of their parents; seeing that we did not sufficiently perceive how great was our poverty, what it was right to implore, or what would be suitable to our condition, he hath provided a remedy even for this our ignorance, and abundantly supplied the deficiencies of our capacity. For he hath prescribed for us a form, in which he gives a statement of all that it is lawful to desire of him, all that is conducive to our benefit, and all that it is necessary to ask. From this kindness of his, we derive great consolation in the persuasion that we pray for nothing absurd, nothing injurious or unseasonable; in a word, nothing but what is agreeable to him; since our petitions are almost in his own words. Plato, observing the ignorance of men in presenting their supplications to God, which if granted were frequently very detrimental to them, pronounces this to be the best method of praying, borrowed from an ancient poet; “King Jupiter, give us those things which are best, whether we pray for them or not: but command evil things to remain at a distance from us, even though we implore them.” And indeed the wisdom of that heathen is conspicuous in this instance, since he considers it as very dangerous to supplicate the Lord to gratify all the dictates of our appetites; and at the same time discovers our infelicity, who cannot, without danger, even open our mouths in the presence of God, unless we be instructed by the Spirit in the right rule of prayer. (*o*) And this privilege deserves to be the more highly valued by us, since the only-begotten Son of God puts words into our mouths, which may deliver our minds from all hesitation.

(*n*) Matt. vi. 9. Luke xi. 2.

(*o*) Rom. viii. 26, 27.

XXXV. This form or rule of prayer, whichever appellation be given to it, is composed of six petitions. For my reason for not agreeing with those who divide it into seven parts is, that the Evangelist appears by the insertion of the adversative conjunction, to connect together these two clauses; as though he had said, Suffer us not to be oppressed with temptation, but rather succour our weakness, and deliver us, that we may not fall. The ancient writers of the Church also are of our opinion; so that what is now added in Matthew in the seventh place, must be explained as belonging to the sixth petition. Now, though the whole prayer is such, that in every part of it the principal regard must be paid to the glory of God; yet to this the first three petitions are particularly devoted, and to this alone we ought to attend in them, without any consideration of our own interest. The remaining three concern ourselves, and are expressly assigned to supplications for those things which tend to our benefit. As when we pray that God's name may be hallowed, since he chooses to prove whether our love and worship of him be voluntary, or dictated by mercenary motives, we must then think nothing of our own interest, but his glory must be proposed as the only object of our fixed attention: nor is it lawful for us to be differently affected in the other petitions of this class. And this indeed conduces to our great benefit; because when the Divine name is hallowed or sanctified as we pray, it becomes likewise our sanctification. But our eyes should overlook and be as it were blind to such advantage, so as not to pay the least regard to it. And even if we were deprived of all hope of private benefit, yet this hallowing, and the other things which pertain to the glory of God, ought still to be the objects of our desires and of our prayers. This is conspicuous in the examples of Moses and Paul, (*p*) who felt a pleasure in averting their minds and eyes from themselves, and in praying with vehement and ardent zeal for their own destruction, that they might promote the kingdom and glory of God even at the expense of their own happiness. On the other hand, when we pray that our daily bread may be given us; although we wish for what is beneficial to ourselves,

yet here also we ought principally to aim at the glory of God, so as not even to ask it, unless it tend to his glory. Now let us attempt an explanation of the prayer itself.

OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN, &c. The first idea that occurs is, what we have before asserted, that we ought never to present a prayer to God but in the name of Christ, since no other name can recommend it to his regard. For by calling God our Father, we certainly plead the name of Christ. For with what confidence could any one call God his Father? who could proceed to such a degree of temerity, as to arrogate to himself the dignity of a son of God, if we had not been adopted as the children of his grace in Christ? who, being his true Son, has been given by him to us as our brother, that the character which properly belongs to him by nature, may become ours by the blessing of adoption, if we receive this inestimable favour with a steady faith: as John says, that to them is given “power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on the name of the only-begotten of the Father.” (*q*) Therefore he denominates himself our Father, and wishes us to give him the same appellation; delivering us from all diffidence by the great sweetness of this name, since the affection of love can nowhere be found in a stronger degree than in the heart of a father. Therefore he could not give us a more certain proof of his infinite love towards us, than by our being denominated the sons of God. But his love to us is as much greater and more excellent than all the love of our parents, as he is superior to all men in goodness and mercy: (*r*) so that though all the fathers in the world, divested of every emotion of paternal affection, should leave their children destitute, he will never forsake us, because “he cannot deny himself.” (*s*) For we have his promise; “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven?” (*t*) Again, in the prophet; “Can a woman forget her child? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.” (*u*) But if we are his sons; then, as a son cannot commit himself to the protection of a stranger and an alien, without at the same

(*q*) John i. 12, 14. (*r*) 1 John iii. 1. Psalm xxvii. 10. Isaiah lxiii. 16.

(*s*) 2 Tim. ii. 13. (*t*) Matt. vii. 11. (*u*) Isaiah xlix. 15.

time complaining of the cruelty or poverty of his father; so neither can we seek supplies for our wants from any other quarter than from him, without charging him with indigence and inability, or with cruelty and excessive austerity.

XXXVII. Neither let us plead that we are justly terrified by a consciousness of our sins, which may cause even a merciful kind Father to be daily offended with us. For if among men, a son can conduct his cause with his father by no better advocate, can conciliate and recover his lost favour by no better mediator, than by approaching him as a humble suppliant, acknowledging his own guilt, and imploring his father's mercy, (for the bowels of a father could not conceal their emotions at such supplications;) what will he do, who is "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort?" (x) Will he not hear the cries and groans of his children when they deprecate his displeasure for themselves, especially since it is to this that he invites and exhorts us; rather than attend to any intercessions of others, to which they resort in great consternation, not without some degree of despair, arising from a doubt of the kindness and clemency of their Father? Of this exuberance of paternal kindness, he gives us a beautiful representation in a parable: (y) where a father meets and embraces a son who had alienated himself from his family, who had dissolutely lavished his substance, who had grievously offended him in every respect: nor does he wait till he actually supplicates for pardon, but anticipates him, recognises him when returning at a great distance, voluntarily runs to meet him, consoles him, and receives him into favour. For by proposing to our view an example of such great kindness in a man, he intended to teach us how much more abundant compassion we ought, notwithstanding our ingratitude, rebellion, and wickedness, to expect from him, who is not only our Father, but the most benevolent and merciful of all fathers, provided we only cast ourselves on his mercy. And to give us the more certain assurance that he is our father, if we be Christians, he will be called not only "Father," but expressly "Our Father;" as though we might address him in the following manner: O Father, whose affection towards thy chil-

(x) 2 Cor. i. 3.

(y) Luke xv. 11, &c.

dren is so strong, and whose readiness to pardon them is so great, we thy children invoke thee and pray to thee, under the assurance and full persuasion that thou hast no other than a paternal affection toward us, how unworthy soever we are of such a Father. But because the contracted capacities of our minds cannot conceive of a favour of such immense magnitude, we not only have Christ as the pledge and earnest of adoption, but as a witness of this adoption he gives us the Spirit, by whom we are enabled with a loud voice freely to cry, "Abba, Father." (z) Whenever, therefore, we may be embarrassed by any difficulty, let us remember to supplicate him, that he will correct our timidity, and give us this spirit of magnanimity to enable us to pray with boldness.

XXXVIII. But since we are not instructed, that every individual should appropriate him to himself exclusively as his father, but rather that we should all in common call him Our Father; we are thereby admonished how strong a fraternal affection ought to prevail between us, who, by the same privilege of mercy and free grace, are equally the children of such a father. For if we all have one common Father, (a) from whom proceeds every blessing we enjoy; there ought to be nothing exclusively appropriated by any among us, but what we should be ready to communicate to each other with the greatest alacrity of heart, whenever necessity requires. Now if we desire, as we ought, to exert ourselves for our mutual assistance, there is nothing in which we can better promote the interests of our brethren, than by commending them to the providential care of our most benevolent Father, with whose mercy and favour no other want can be experienced. And, indeed, this is a debt which we owe to our Father himself. For as he who truly and cordially loves any father of a family, feels likewise a love and friendship for his whole household; in the same manner, our zeal and affection towards this heavenly Father must be shewn towards his people, his family, his inheritance, whom he hath dignified with the honourable appellation of the "fulness" of his only-begotten Son. (b) Let a Christian then regulate his prayers by this rule, that they be common, and comprehend all who are

(z) Gal. iv. 6.

(a) Matt. xxiii. 9.

(b) Ephes. i. 23.

his brethren in Christ; and not only those whom he at present sees and knows to be such, but all men in the world; respecting whom, what God hath determined is beyond our knowledge; only that to wish and hope the best concerning them, is equally the dictate of piety and of humanity. It becomes us, however, to exercise a peculiar and superior affection "unto them who are of the household of faith;" whom the apostle hath in every case recommended to our particular regards. (c) In a word, all our prayers ought to be such, as to respect that community which our Lord hath established in his kingdom and in his family.

XXXIX. Yet this is no objection to the lawfulness of particular prayers, both for ourselves and for other certain individuals; provided our minds be not withdrawn from a regard to this community, nor even diverted from it, but refer every thing to this point. For though the words of them be singular, yet as they are directed to this end, they cease not to be common. All this may be rendered very intelligible by a similitude. God has given a general command to relieve the wants of all the poor: and yet this is obeyed by them who to that end succour the indigence of those whom they either know or see to be labouring under poverty; even though they pass by multitudes who are oppressed with necessities equally severe, because neither their knowledge nor ability can extend to all. In the same manner, no opposition is made to the Divine will by them who, regarding and considering this common society of the Church, present such particular prayers, in which, with a public spirit, but in particular terms, they recommend to God themselves or others, whose necessity he hath placed within their more immediate knowledge. However, there is not a perfect similarity in every respect between prayer and donation of alms, for munificence cannot be exercised but towards them whose wants we have perceived; but we may assist by our prayers even the greatest strangers, and those with whom we are the most unacquainted, how distant soever they may be from us. This is done by that general form of prayer, which comprehends all the children of God, among whom they also are numbered. To this may be

referred the exhortation which Paul gives the faithful of his age, "that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands without wrath:" (*d*) because by admonishing them, that discord shuts the gate against prayers, he advises them unanimously to unite all their petitions together.

XL. It is added, **THAT HE IS IN HEAVEN.** From which it is not hastily to be inferred, that he is included and circumscribed within the circumference of heaven, as by certain barriers. For Solomon confesses, that "the heaven of heavens cannot contain" him. (*e*) And he says himself, by the prophet; "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." (*f*) By which he clearly signifies that he is not limited to any particular region, but diffused throughout all space. But because the dulness of our minds could not otherwise conceive of his ineffable glory, it is designated to us by the heaven, than which we can behold nothing more august or more majestic. Since then, wherever our senses apprehend any thing, there they are accustomed to fix it; God is represented as beyond all place, that when we seek him we may be elevated above all reach of both body and soul. Moreover, by this form of expression, he is exalted above all possibility of corruption or mutation: finally, it is signified, that he comprehends and contains the whole world, and governs the universe by his power. Wherefore, this is the same as if he had been said to be possessed of an incomprehensible essence, infinite magnitude or sublimity, irresistible power, and unlimited immortality. But when we hear this, our thoughts must be raised to a higher elevation when God is mentioned; that we may not entertain any terrestrial or carnal imaginations concerning him, that we may not measure him by our diminutive proportions, or judge of his will by our affections. We should likewise be encouraged to place the most implicit reliance on him, by whose providence and power we understand both heaven and earth to be governed. To conclude; under the name of "Our Father" is represented to us, that God who hath appeared to us in his own image, that we might call upon him with a steady faith: and the familiar appellation of Father is not only adapted to produce confidence, but also efficacious to prevent

(*d*) 1 Tim. ii. 8. (*e*) 1 Kings viii. 27. (*f*) Isaiah lxvi. 1. Acts vii. 49. xvii. 24.

our minds from being seduced to dubious or fictitious deities, and to cause them to ascend from the only begotten Son to the common Father of angels and of saints: moreover, when his throne is placed in heaven, we are reminded by his government of the world, that it is not in vain for us to approach to him who makes us the objects of his present and voluntary care. "He that cometh to God (says the apostle) must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (*g*) Christ asserts both these of his Father, that we may have, first, a firm faith in his existence, and then a certain persuasion that, since he deigns to extend his providence to us, he will not neglect our salvation. By these principles, Paul prepares for praying in right manner; for his exhortation, "Let your requests be made known unto God," is thus prefaced; "The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing." (*h*) Whence it appears, that their prayers must be attended with great doubt and perplexity of mind, who are not well established in this truth, that "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous." (*i*)

XLI. The first petition is, THAT GOD'S NAME MAY BE HALLOWED; the necessity of which is connected with our great disgrace. For what is more shameful, than that the Divine glory should be obscured partly by our ingratitude, partly by our malignity, and as far as possible, obliterated by our presumption, infatuation, and perverseness? Notwithstanding all the sacrilegious rage and clamours of the impious, yet the refulgence of holiness still adorns the Divine name. Nor does the Psalmist without reason exclaim; "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth." (*k*) For wherever God may be known, there must necessarily be a manifestation of his perfections of power, goodness, wisdom, righteousness, mercy, and truth, which command our admiration and excite us to celebrate his praise. Therefore, because God is so unjustly robbed of his holiness on earth, if it is not in our power to assert it for him, we are at least commanded to regard it in our prayers. The substance of it is, that we wish God to receive all the honour that he deserves, that men may never speak or think of him but with the highest reverence; to which is

(*g*) Heb. xi. 6.

(*h*) Phil. iv. 5, 6.

(*i*) Psalm xxxiv. 15. xxxiii. 18.

(*k*) Psalm xlviii. 10.

opposed that profanation, which has always been too common in the world, as it continues to be in the present age. And hence the necessity of this petition, which, if we were influenced by only a tolerable degree of piety, ought to be superfluous. But if the name of God be truly hallowed, when separated from all others it breathes pure glory, we are here commanded to pray, not only that God will vindicate his holy name from all contempt and ignominy, but also that he will constrain all mankind to revere it. Now as God manifests himself to us partly by his word, and partly by his works, he is no otherwise hallowed by us, than if we attribute to him in both instances that which belongs to him, and so receive whatever proceeds from him; ascribing, moreover, equal praise to his severity and to his clemency; since, on the multiplicity and variety of his works he hath impressd characters of his glory, which should draw from every tongue a confession of his praise. Thus will the Scripture obtain a just authority with us, nor will any event obstruct the benedictions which God deserves in the whole course of his government of the world. The tendency of the petition is, farther, that all impiety which sullies this holy name, may be utterly abolished; that whatever obscures or diminishes this hallowing, whether detraction or derision, may disappear; and that while God restrains all sacrilege, his majesty may shine with increasing splendour.

XLII. The second petition is, **THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD MAY COME:** which, though it contains nothing new, is yet not without reason distinguished from the first: because if we consider our inattention in the most important of all concerns, it is useful for that which ought of itself to have been most intimately known to us, to be inculcated in a variety of words. Therefore, after we have been commanded to pray to God to subdue, and at length utterly to destroy, every thing that sullies his holy name; there is now added another petition, similar and almost identically the same, That his kingdom may come. Now though we have already given a definition of this kingdom, I now briefly repeat, that God reigns when men, renouncing themselves and despising the world and the present state, submit themselves to his righteousness, so as to aspire to the heavenly state. Thus this kingdom consists of two parts; the

one, God's correcting by the power of his Spirit all our carnal and depraved appetites, which oppose him in great numbers; the other, his forming all our powers to an obedience to his commands. No others therefore observe a proper order in this petition, but they who begin from themselves, that is, that they may be purified from all corruptions which disturb the tranquillity, or violate the purity of God's kingdom. Now since the Divine word resembles a royal sceptre, we are commanded to pray that he will subdue the hearts and minds of all men to a voluntary obedience to it. This is accomplished, when by the secret inspiration of his Spirit, he displays the efficacy of his word; and causes it to obtain the honour it deserves. Afterwards, it is our duty to descend to the impious, by whom his authority is resisted with the perseverance of obstinacy and the fury of despair. God therefore erects his kingdom on the humiliation of the whole world, though his methods of humiliation are various; for he restrains the passions of some, and breaks the unsubdued arrogance of others. It ought to be the object of our daily wishes, that God would collect churches for himself from all the countries of the earth, that he would enlarge their numbers, enrich them with gifts, and establish a legitimate order among them: that, on the contrary, he would overthrow all the enemies of the pure Doctrine and religion, that he would confound their counsels, and defeat their attempts. Whence it appears that the desire of a daily progress is not enjoined us in vain; because human affairs are never in such a happy situation, as that all defilement of sin is removed, and purity can be seen in full perfection. This perfection is deferred till the last advent of Christ, when the apostle says, "God will be all in all." (1) And so this petition ought to withdraw us from all the corruptions of the world, which separate us from God, and prevent his kingdom from flourishing within us; it ought likewise to inflame us with an ardent desire of mortifying the flesh, and finally to teach us to bear the cross; since these are the means which God chooses for the extension of his kingdom. Nor should we be impatient that the outward man is destroyed, provided the inward man be renewed. For

(1) 1 Cor. xv. 28.

this is the order of the kingdom of God, that when we submit to his righteousness, he makes us partakers of his glory. This is accomplished, when discovering his light and truth with perpetual accessions of splendour, before which the shades and falsehoods of Satan and of his kingdom vanish and become extinct, he by the aids of his Spirit directs his children into the path of rectitude, and strengthens them to perseverance; but defeats the impious conspiracies of his enemies, confounds their insidious and fraudulent designs, disappoints their malice, and represses their obstinacy, till at length "he" will "consume" Antichrist "with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy" all impiety "with the brightness of his coming." (m)

XLIII. The third petition is, THAT THE WILL OF GOD MAY BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN: which, though it is an appendage to his kingdom, and cannot be disjoined from it, is yet not without reason separately mentioned on account of our ignorance, which does not apprehend with facility what it is for God to reign in the world. There will be nothing absurd, then, in understanding this as an explanation; that God's kingdom will then prevail in the world, when all shall submit to his will. Now we speak not here of his secret will, by which he governs all things, and appoints them to fulfil his own purposes. For though Satan and men oppose him with all the violence of rage, yet his incomprehensible wisdom is able, not only to divert their impetuosity, but to overrule it for the accomplishment of his decrees. But the Divine will here intended, is that to which voluntary obedience corresponds; and therefore heaven is expressly compared with the earth, because the angels, as the Psalmist says, spontaneously "do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." (n) We are therefore commanded to desire that, as in heaven nothing is done but according to the Divine will, and the angels are placidly conformed to every thing that is right, so the earth, all obstinacy and depravity being annihilated, may be subject to the same government. And in praying for this, we renounce our own carnal desires; because, unless we resign all our affections to God, we are guilty of all the opposition in our power to his will,

(m) 2 Thess. ii. 8.

(n) Psalm ciii. 20.

for nothing proceeds from us but what is sinful. And we are likewise habituated by this petition to a renunciation of ourselves, that God may rule us according to his own pleasure; and not only so, but that he may also create in us new minds and new hearts, annihilating our own, that we may experience no emotion of desire within us but a mere consent to his will; in a word, that we may have no will of our own, but that our hearts may be governed by his Spirit, by whose internal teachings we may learn to love those things which please him, and to hate those which he disapproves; consequently, that he may render abortive all those desires which are repugnant to his will. These are the three first clauses of this prayer, in praying which we ought solely to have in view the glory of God, omitting all consideration of ourselves, and not regarding any advantage of our own, which, though they largely contribute to it, should not be our end in these petitions. But though all these things, even if we never think of them, nor wish for them, nor request them, must nevertheless happen in their appointed time, yet they ought to be the objects of our wishes, and the subjects of our prayers. And such petitions it will be highly proper for us to offer, that we may testify and profess ourselves to be the servants and sons of God; manifesting the sincerest devotedness, and making the most zealous efforts in our power for advancing the honour which is due to him, both as a Master and as a Father. Persons, therefore, who are not incited, by this ardent zeal for promoting the glory of God, to pray, that his name may be hallowed, that his kingdom may come, and that his will may be done, are not to be numbered among his sons and servants; and as all these things will be accomplished in opposition to their inclinations, so they will contribute to their confusion and destruction.

XLIV. Next follows the second part of the prayer, in which we descend to our own interests: not that we must dismiss all thoughts of the Divine glory (which according to Paul (*o*) should be regarded even in eating and drinking), and only seek what is advantageous to ourselves: but we have already announced that this is the distinction;—that God, by exclusively

claiming three petitions, absorbs us entirely in the consideration of himself, that thus he may prove our piety: afterwards he permits us to attend to our own interests, yet on this condition, that the end of all our requests be the illustration of his glory by whatever benefits he confers on us, since nothing is more reasonable than that we live and die to him. But the first petition of the second part, **GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD**, is a general request to God for a supply of all our corporeal wants in the present state, not only for food and clothing, but also for every thing which he sees to be conducive to our good, that we may eat our bread in peace. By which we briefly surrender ourselves to his care, and commit ourselves to his providence, that he may feed, nourish and preserve us. For our most benevolent Father disdains not to receive even our body into his charge and protection, that he may exercise our faith in these minute circumstances, while we expect every thing from him, even down to a crumb of bread and a drop of water. For since it is a strange effect of our iniquity, to be affected and distressed with greater solicitude for the body than for the soul; many who venture to confide to God the interests of their souls, are nevertheless still solicitous concerning the body, still anxious what they shall eat and what they shall wear, and unless they have an abundance of corn, wine, and oil, for the supply of their future wants, tremble with fear. Of so much greater importance to us is the shadow of this transitory life, than that eternal immortality. But they who, confiding in God, have once cast off that anxiety for the concerns of the body, expect likewise to receive from him superior blessings, even salvation and eternal life. It is therefore no trivial exercise of faith, to expect from God those things which otherwise fill us with so much anxiety; nor is it a small proficiency when we have divested ourselves of this infidelity, which is almost universally interwoven with the human constitution. The speculations of some, concerning supernatural bread, appear to me not very consonant to the meaning of Christ; for if we did not ascribe to God the character of our Supporter even in this transitory life, our prayer would be defective. The reason which they allege has too much profanity; that it is unbecoming for the children of God, who

ought to be spiritual, not only to devote their own attention to terrestrial cares, but also to involve God in the same anxieties with themselves: as though, truly, his benediction and paternal favour were not conspicuous even in our sustenance; or there were no meaning in the assertion, that “godliness hath promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” (p) Now though remission of sins is of much greater value than corporeal aliments, yet Christ has given the first place to the inferior blessing, that he might gradually raise us to the two remaining petitions, which properly pertain to the heavenly life: in which he has consulted our dulness. We are commanded to ask “our bread,” that we may be content with the portion which our heavenly Father designs to allot us, nor practise any illicit arts for the love of lucre. In the mean time, it must be understood that it becomes ours by a title of donation; because neither our industry, nor our labour, nor our hands (as is observed by Moses), (q) acquire any thing for us of themselves, when unattended by the Divine blessing; and that even an abundance of bread would not be of the least service to us, unless it were by the Divine power converted into nourishment. And therefore this liberality of God is equally as necessary to the rich as to the poor; for though their barns and cellars were full, they would faint with hunger and thirst, unless through his goodness they could enjoy their food. The expression “this day,” or “day by day” as it is in the other Evangelist, and the epithet *daily*, restrain the inordinate desire of transitory things, with which we are often violently inflamed, and which leads to other evils: since if we have a greater abundance, we fondly lavish it away in pleasure, delights, ostentation, and other kinds of luxury. Therefore we are enjoined to ask only as much as will supply our necessity, and as it were for the present day, with this confidence, that our heavenly Father, after having fed us to-day, will not fail us to-morrow. Whatever affluence then we possess, even when our barns and cellars are full, yet it behoves us always to ask for our daily bread; because it must be considered as an undeniable truth, that all property is nothing, any farther than the Lord by the effusions of his favour

(p) 1 Tim. iv. 8.

(q) Lev. xxi. 20.

blessees it with continual improvement; and that even what we have in our possession is not our own, any farther than as he hourly bestows on us some portion of it, and grants us the use of it. Since the pride of man does not easily suffer itself to be convinced of this, the Lord declares that he has given to all ages an eminent proof of it, by feeding his people with manna in the desert, in order to apprise us "that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of his mouth;" (r) which implies, that it is his power alone by which our life and strength are sustained, although he communicates it to us by corporeal means: as he is accustomed to teach us likewise by an opposite example, when he breaks, at his pleasure, the strength (and as he himself calls it, "the staff") of bread, so that though men eat they pine with hunger, and though they drink are parched with thirst. (s) Now they who are not satisfied with daily bread, but whose avidity is insatiable, and whose desires are unbounded, and they who are satiated with their abundance, and think themselves secure amid their immense riches, and who nevertheless supplicate the Divine Being in this petition, are guilty of mocking him. For the former ask what they would not wish to obtain, and even what most of all they abominate, that is, daily bread only; they conceal from God, as much as they can, their avaricious disposition; whereas true prayer ought to pour out before him the whole mind, and all the inmost secrets of the soul: and the latter implore what they are far from expecting to receive from him, what they think they have in their own possession. In its being called "ours," the Divine goodness is, as we have observed, the more conspicuous, since it makes that *ours*, to which we have no claim of right. Yet we must not reject the explanation which I have likewise hinted at, that it intends also such as is acquired by just and innocent labour, and not procured by acts of deception and rapine; because, whatever we acquire by any criminal methods, is never our own, but belongs to others. Our praying that it may be "given" to us, signifies that it is the simple and gratuitous donation of God, from what quarter soever we receive it; even when it most of all appears

(r) Deut. viii. 3. Matt. iv. 4.

(s) Lev. xxvi. 26.

to be obtained by our own skill and industry, and to be procured by our own hands; since it is solely the effect of his blessing, that our labours are attended with success.

XLV. It follows; **FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS:** in which petition, and the next, Christ hath comprised whatever relates to the heavenly life; as in these two parts consists the spiritual covenant which God hath made for the salvation of his Church, "I will write my law in their hearts, and will pardon their iniquities." (u) Here Christ begins with remission of sins; immediately after, he subjoins a second favour, that God would defend us by the power, and support us by the aid of his Spirit, to enable us to stand unconquered by all temptations. Sins he calls debts, because we owe the penalty of them; a debt we are altogether incapable of discharging, unless we are released by this remission, which is a pardon flowing from his gratuitous mercy, when he freely cancels these debts without any payment from us, being satisfied by his own mercy in Christ, who has once given himself for our redemption. Those therefore who rely on God's being satisfied with their own merits, or the merits of others, and persuade themselves that remission of sins is purchased by these satisfactions, have no interest in this gratuitous forgiveness; and while they call upon God in this form, they are only subscribing their own accusation, and even sealing their condemnation with their own testimony. For they confess themselves debtors, unless they are discharged by the benefit of remission, which nevertheless they accept not, but rather refuse, while they obtrude upon God their own merits and satisfactions. For in this way they do not implore his mercy, but appeal to his judgment. They who amuse themselves with dreams of perfection, superseding the necessity of praying for pardon, may have disciples whom itching ears lead into delusions; but it must be clear that all whom they gain are perverted from Christ, since he teaches all to confess their guilt, and receives none but sinners; not that he would flatter and encourage sins, but because he knew that the faithful are never wholly free from the vices of their flesh, but always remain obnoxious to the judgment of God. It ought, indeed, to

(u) Jer. xxxi. 33, 34. xxxiii. 8.

be the object of our desires and strenuous exertions, that, having fully discharged every part of our duty, we may truly congratulate ourselves before God on being pure from every stain; but as it pleases God to restore his image within us by degrees, so that some contagion always remains in our flesh, the remedy ought never to be neglected. Now if Christ, by the authority given him by the Father, enjoins us, as long as we live, to have recourse to prayer for the pardon of guilt, who will tolerate the new teachers, who endeavour to dazzle the eyes of the simple with a visionary phantom of perfect innocence, and fill them with a confidence in the possibility of their being delivered from all sin? Which, according to John, is no other than making God a liar. (x) At the same time also, these worthless men, by obliterating one article, mutilate, and so totally invalidate, the covenant of God, in which we have seen our salvation is contained; being thus guilty not only of sacrilege by separating things so united, but also of impiety and cruelty, by overwhelming miserable souls with despair, and of treachery to themselves and others, by contracting a habit of carelessness in diametrical opposition to the Divine mercy. The objection of some, that in wishing the advent of God's kingdom we desire at the same time the abolition of sin, is too puerile; because, in the first part of the prayer, we have an exhibition of the highest perfection, but here of infirmity. Thus these two things are perfectly consistent, that in aspiring towards the mark we may not neglect the remedies required by our necessity. Lastly, we pray that we may be forgiven AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS; that is, as we forgive and pardon all who have ever injured us either by unjust actions or by contumelious language. Not that it is our province to forgive the guilt of sin and transgression; this is the prerogative of God alone: our forgiveness consists in divesting the mind of anger, enmity, and desire of revenge, and losing the memory of injuries by a voluntary forgetfulness. Wherefore we must not pray to God for forgiveness of sins, unless we also forgive all the offences and injuries of others against us, either present or past. But if we retain any enmities in our minds, meditate acts

(x) 1 John i. 10.

of revenge, and seek opportunities of annoyance, and even if we do not endeavour to obtain reconciliation with our enemies, to oblige them by all kind offices, and to render them our friends; we beseech God, by this petition, not to grant us remission of sins. For we supplicate him to grant to us what we grant to others. This is praying him, not to grant it to us, unless we grant it also. What do persons of this description gain by their prayers but a heavier judgment? Lastly, it must be observed, that this is not a condition, that he would forgive us as we forgive our debtors, because we can merit his forgiveness of us by our forgiveness of others, as though it described the cause of his forgiveness: but, by this expression, the Lord intended, partly to comfort the weakness of our faith; for he has added this as a sign, that we may be as certainly assured of remission of sins being granted us by him, as we are certain and conscious of our granting it to others; if, at the same time, our minds be freed and purified from all hatred, envy, and revenge: partly by this, as a criterion, he expunges from the number of his children, those who, precipitate to revenge and difficult to forgive, maintain inveterate enmities, and cherish in their own hearts towards others, that indignation which they deprecate from themselves, that they may not presume to invoke him as their Father. Which is also clearly expressed by Luke in Christ's own words.

XLVI. The sixth petition is, **LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.** This, as we have said, corresponds to the promise respecting the law of God to be engraven in our hearts. But because our obedience to God is not without continual warfare, and severe and arduous conflicts, we here pray for arms, and assistance to enable us to gain the victory. This suggests to us our necessity, not only of the grace of the Spirit within us to soften, bend, and direct our hearts to obedience to God, but also of his aid to render us invincible in opposition to all the stratagems and violent assaults of Satan. Now the forms of temptations are many and various. For the corrupt conceptions of the mind, provoking us to transgressions of the law, whether suggested by our own concupiscence or excited by the devil, are temptations; and things not evil in themselves, nevertheless become temptations through the subtlety of

the devil, when they are obtruded on our eyes in such a manner that their intervention occasions our seduction or declension from God. And these temptations are either from prosperous, or from adverse events. From prosperous ones, as riches, power, honours; which generally dazzle men's eyes by their glitter and external appearance of goodness, and ensnare them with their blandishments, that, caught with such delusions, and intoxicated with such delights, they forget their God. From unpropitious ones, as poverty, reproaches, contempt, afflictions, and other things of this kind; overcome with the bitterness and difficulty of which, they fall into despondency, cast away faith and hope, and at length become altogether alienated from God. To both these kinds of temptations which assail us, whether kindled within us by our concupiscence, or presented to us by the craft of Satan, we pray our heavenly Father not to permit us to yield, but rather to sustain and raise us up with his hand, that, strong in his might, we may be able to stand firm against all the assaults of our malignant enemy, whatever imaginations he may inject into our minds; and also, that whatever is presented to us on either quarter, we may convert it to our benefit, that is, by not being elated with prosperity or dejected with adversity. Yet we do not here pray for an entire exemption from all temptations, which we very much need, to excite, stimulate, and animate us, lest we should grow torpid with too much rest. For it was not without reason that David wished to be tempted or tried; nor is it without cause that the Lord daily tempts his elect, trying them by ignominy, poverty, tribulation, and the cross in various forms. But the temptations of God are widely different from those of Satan. Satan tempts to overthrow, condemn, confound, and destroy. But God, that by proving his people, he may make a trial of their sincerity, to confirm their strength by exercising it, to mortify, purify, and refine their flesh, which, without such restraints, would run into the greatest excesses. Besides, Satan attacks persons unarmed and unprepared, to overwhelm the unwary. "God with the temptation, also makes a way to escape, that they may be able to bear" whatever he brings upon them. (y)

By the word *evil*, whether we understand the devil or sin, is of little importance. Satan himself, indeed, is the enemy that lies in wait for our life; but sin is the weapon with which he seeks our destruction. Our petition therefore is, that we may not be overwhelmed and conquered by any temptations, but that we may stand, strong in the power of the Lord, against all adverse powers that assault us; which is not to submit to temptations, that being taken into his custody and charge, and being secure in his protection, we may persevere unconquered, and rise superior to sin, death, the gates of hell, and the whole kingdom of the devil. This is being delivered from evil. Here it must also be carefully remarked, that it is not in our power to contend with so powerful an enemy as the devil, and sustain the violence of his assaults. Otherwise it would be useless, or insulting, to supplicate from God what we already possessed in ourselves. Certainly, they who prepare themselves for such a combat with self-confidence, are not sufficiently aware of the skill and prowess of the enemy that they have to meet. Now we pray to be delivered from his power, as from the mouth of a ravenous and raging lion, just about to tear us with his teeth and claws, and to swallow us down his throat, unless the Lord snatch us from the jaws of death; knowing, at the same time, that if the Lord shall be present and fight for us while we are silent, in his strength "we shall do valiantly." (z) Let others confide as they please, in the native abilities and powers of free-will, which they suppose themselves to possess; let it be sufficient for us, to stand and be strong in the power of God alone. But this petition comprehends more than at first appears. For if the Spirit of God is our strength for fighting the battle with Satan, we shall not be able to gain the victory, till, being full of him, we shall have laid aside all the infirmity of our flesh. When we pray for deliverance from Satan and sin, therefore, we pray to be frequently enriched with new accessions of Divine grace; till, being quite filled with them, we may be able to triumph over all evil. To some there appears a difficulty and harshness in our petition to God, that he will not lead us into temptation, whereas, according to James, it is contrary to his nature for him to tempt us. (a) But this objection has already

(z) Psalm lx. 12.

(a) James i. 13, 14.

been partly answered, because our own lust is properly the cause of all the temptations that overcome us, and therefore we are charged with the guilt. Nor does James intend any other than to assert the futility and injustice of transferring to God the vices which we are constrained to impute to ourselves, because we are conscious of our being guilty of them. But notwithstanding this, God may, when he sees fit, deliver us to Satan, abandon us to a reprobate mind and sordid passions, and so lead us into temptations, by a righteous yet often secret judgment; the cause being frequently concealed from man, and, at the same time, well known to him. Whence it is inferred, that there is no impropriety in this mode of expression, if we are persuaded that there is any meaning in his frequent threatenings, that he will manifest his vengeance on the reprobate, by smiting them with blindness and hardness of heart.

XLVII. These three petitions, in which we particularly commend to God, ourselves and all our concerns, evidently prove, what we have before asserted, that the prayers of Christians ought to be public, and to regard the public edification of the Church, and the advancement of the communion of the faithful. For each individual does not supplicate the gift of any favour to himself in particular; but we all in common pray for our bread, the remission of our sins, that we may not be led into temptation, that we may be delivered from evil. The cause is likewise subjoined, which gives us such great boldness in asking, and confidence of obtaining; which, though not to be found in the Latin copies, yet appears too apposite to this place to be omitted—namely, **HIS IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER.** This is a solid and secure basis for our faith; for if our prayers were to be recommended to God by our own merit, who could dare to utter a word in his presence? Now, all miserable, unworthy, and destitute as we are of every recommendation, yet we shall never want an argument or plea for our prayers: our confidence can never forsake us; for our Father can never be deprived of his kingdom, power, and glory. The whole is concluded with **AMEN**; which expresses our ardent desire to obtain the blessings supplicated of God, and confirms our hope that all these things are already

obtained, and will certainly be granted to us; because they are promised by God, who is incapable of deception. And this agrees with that form of petition already quoted—"Do this, O Lord, for thy name sake, not for our sake, or for our righteousness;" in which the saints not only express the end of their prayers, but acknowledge that they are unworthy to obtain it, unless God derive the cause from himself, and that their confidence of success arises solely from his nature.

XLVIII. Whatever we ought, or are even at liberty, to seek from God, is stated to us in this model and directory for prayer, given by that best of masters, Christ, whom the Father hath set over us as our Teacher, and to whom alone he hath enjoined us to listen. (b) For he was always his eternal wisdom, and being made man was given to men as the Angel of great counsel. (c) And this prayer is so comprehensive and complete, that whatever addition is made of any thing extraneous or foreign, not capable of being referred to it, is impious and unworthy of the approbation of God. For in this summary he has prescribed what is worthy of him, what is acceptable to him, what is necessary for us, and, in a word, what he chooses to bestow. Wherefore those who presume to go beyond it, and to ask of God any thing else, in the first place, are determined to make some addition of their own to the wisdom of God, which cannot be done without folly and blasphemy; in the next place, despising the limits fixed by the will of God, they are led far astray by their own irregular desires: and in the last place, they will never obtain any thing, when they pray without faith. And there is no doubt that all prayers of this kind are made without faith, because they are not sanctioned by the word of God, the only basis on which faith can stand. But they who neglect the Master's rule and indulge their own desires, not only deviate from the word of God, but make all possible opposition against it. With equal elegance and truth, therefore, Tertullian has called this a *legitimate prayer*, tacitly implying, that all others are irregular and unlawful.

XLIX. We would not here be understood, as if we were confined to this form of prayer, without the liberty of changing

(b) Matt. xvii. 5. (c) Isaiah xi. 2.

a word or syllable. For the scriptures contain many prayers, expressed in words very different from this, yet written by the same Spirit, and very profitable for our use. Many, which have little verbal resemblance to it, are continually suggested to the faithful by the same Spirit. We only mean by these observations, that no one should even seek, expect, or ask for any thing that is not summarily comprehended in this prayer, though there may be a diversity of expression, without any variation of sense. As it is certain that all the prayers contained in the Scriptures, or proceeding from pious hearts, are referred to this, so it is impossible to find one any where which can surpass or even equal the perfection of this. Here is nothing omitted which ought to be recollected for the praises of God, nothing that should occur to the mind of man for his own advantage; and the whole is so complete, as justly to inspire universal despair of attempting any improvement. To conclude, let us remember, that this is the teaching of Divine wisdom, which taught what it willed, and willed what was needful.

L. But though we have before said that we ought to be always aspiring towards God with our minds, and praying without intermission, yet as our weakness requires many assistances, and our indolence needs to be stimulated; we ought every one of us, for the sake of regularity, to appoint particular hours which should not elapse without prayer, and which should witness all the affections of the mind entirely engaged in this exercise: as, when we rise in the morning, before we enter on the business of the day, when we sit down to meat, when we have been fed by the Divine blessing, when we retire to rest. This must not be a superstitious observance of hours, by which, as if discharging our debt to God, we may fancy ourselves discharged from all obligation for the remaining hours; but a discipline for our weakness, which may thus, from time to time, be exercised and stimulated. It must especially be the object of our solicitous care, whenever we are oppressed, or see others oppressed with adversity, immediately to resort to him with celerity, not of body but of mind; secondly, to suffer no prosperity of our own or others to pass without testifying our acknowledgment of his love by praise and thanksgiving: last-

ly, we must carefully observe this in every prayer; that we entertain not the thought of binding God to certain circumstances, or prescribing to him the time, the place, or the manner of his proceedings. As we are taught by this prayer to fix no law, to impose no condition on him, but to leave it to his will to do what he intends, in the manner, at the time, and in the place he pleases. Therefore, before we form a petition for ourselves, we first pray that his will may be done; thereby submitting our will to his, that, being as it were bridled and restrained, it may not presume to regulate God, but may constitute him the arbiter and ruler of all its desires.

LI. If with minds composed to this obedience we suffer ourselves to be governed by the laws of Divine Providence, we shall easily learn to persevere in prayer, and with suspended desires to wait patiently for the Lord; assured, though he does not discover himself, yet that he is always near us, and in his own time will declare that his ears have not been deaf to those prayers which, to human apprehension, seemed to be neglected. Now this, if God do not at any time answer our first prayers, will be an immediate consolation, to prevent our sinking into despair, like those who, actuated only by their own ardour, call upon God in such a manner, that if he do not attend to their first transports, and afford them present aid, they at once imagine him to be displeased and angry with them, and, casting away all hope of succeeding in their prayers, cease to call upon him. But deferring our hope with a well-tempered equanimity, let us rather practise the perseverance so highly recommended to us in the Scriptures. For in the Psalms we may frequently observe how David and other faithful men, when almost wearied with praying they seemed to beat the air, and God seemed deaf to their petitions, yet did not desist from praying; because the authority of the Divine word is not maintained, unless it be fully credited, notwithstanding the appearance of any circumstances to the contrary. Nor let us tempt God, and provoke him against us by wearying him with our presumption; which is the practice of many who merely bargain with God on a certain condition, and, as though he were subservient to their passions, bind him with laws of their own stipulation; with which unless he immediately complies, they give way to anger and fretfulness,

to cavils, and murmurs, and rage. To such persons, therefore, he frequently grants in his wrath what he denies in mercy to others. This is exemplified in the children of Israel, for whom it had been better for the Lord not to have heard them, than for them to swallow his indignation with the meat that he sent them. (*d*)

LII. But if, after long waiting, our sense neither understands what advance we have made by praying, nor experiences any advantage resulting from it, yet our faith will assure us, what cannot be perceived by sense, that we have obtained what was expedient for us, since the Lord so frequently and so certainly promises to take care of our troubles when they have been once deposited in his bosom. And thus he will cause us to possess abundance in poverty, and consolation in affliction. For though all things fail us, yet God will never forsake us; he cannot disappoint the expectation and patience of his people. He will amply compensate us for the loss of all others, for he comprehends in himself all blessings, which he will reveal to us at the day of judgment, when his kingdom will be fully manifested. Besides, though God grants our prayers, he does not always answer them according to the express form of the request; but seeming to keep us in suspense, shews by unknown means that our prayers were not in vain. This is the meaning of these words of John; "If we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." (*e*) This seems to be a feeble superfluity of expression, but is in reality a very useful declaration, that God, even when he does not comply with our desires, is nevertheless favourable and propitious to our prayers, so that a hope depending upon his word can never disappoint us. Now this patience is very necessary to support the faithful, who would not long stand unless they relied upon it. For the Lord proves his people with heavy trials, and exercises them with severity: frequently driving them to various kinds of extremities, and suffering them to remain in them a long time before he grants them any enjoyment of his grace: and as Hannah says, "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth

(*d*) Numb. xi. 18, 33.

(*e*) 1 John v. 15.

up." (f) In such distresses must they not inevitably faint in their minds and fall into despair, unless in the midst of their affliction and desolation, and almost death, they were revived by this reflection, that God regards them, and that the end of their present evils is approaching? But though they rely on the certainty of this hope, they at the same time cease not to pray; because, without constant perseverance in prayer, we pray to no purpose.



CHAPTER XXI.

Eternal Election, or God's Predestination of some to Salvation and of others to Destruction.

THE covenant of life not being equally preached to all, and among those to whom it is preached not always finding the same reception; this diversity discovers the wonderful depth of the Divine judgment. Nor is it to be doubted that this variety also follows, subject to the decision of God's eternal election. If it be evidently the result of the Divine will, that salvation is freely offered to some, and others are prevented from attaining it; this immediately gives rise to important and difficult questions, which are incapable of any other explication, than by the establishment of pious minds in what ought to be received concerning election and predestination:—a question, in the opinion of many, full of perplexity; for they consider nothing more unreasonable, than that of the common mass of mankind some should be predestinated to salvation, and others to destruction. But how unreasonably they perplex themselves will afterwards appear from the sequel of our discourse. Besides, the very obscurity which excites such dread, not only displays the utility of this doctrine, but shews it to be productive of the most delightful benefit. We shall never be clearly convinced as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the fountain of

God's free mercy, till we are acquainted with his eternal election, which illustrates the grace of God by this comparison, that he adopts not all promiscuously to the hope of salvation, but gives to some what he refuses to others. Ignorance of this principle evidently detracts from the Divine glory, and diminishes real humility. But according to Paul, what is so necessary to be known, never can be known, unless God, without any regard to works, chooses those whom he has decreed. "At this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise, grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise, work is no more work." (g) If we need to be recalled to the origin of election, to prove that we obtain salvation from no other source than the mere goodness of God, they who desire to extinguish this principle, do all they can to obscure what ought to be magnificently and loudly celebrated, and to pluck up humility by the roots. In ascribing the salvation of the remnant of the people to the election of grace, Paul clearly testifies, that it is then only known that God saves whom he will of his mere good pleasure, and does not dispense a reward to which there can be no claim. They who shut the gates to prevent any one from presuming to approach and taste this doctrine, do no less injury to man than to God; for nothing else will be sufficient to produce in us suitable humility, or to impress us with a due sense of our great obligations to God. Nor is there any other basis for solid confidence, even according to the authority of Christ, who, to deliver us from all fear, and render us invincible amidst so many dangers, snares, and deadly conflicts, promises to preserve in safety all whom the Father hath committed to his care. Whence we infer, that they who know not themselves to be God's peculiar people will be tortured with continual anxiety; and therefore, that the interest of all the faithful, as well as their own, is very badly consulted by those who, blind to the three advantages we have remarked, would wholly remove the foundation of our salvation. And hence the Church rises to our view; which otherwise, as Bernard justly observes,

could neither be discovered nor recognised among creatures, being in two respects wonderfully concealed in the bosom of a blessed predestination, and in the mass of a miserable damnation. But before I enter on the subject itself, I must address some preliminary observations to two sorts of persons. The discussion of predestination, a subject of itself rather intricate, is made very perplexed, and therefore dangerous, by human curiosity, which no barriers can restrain from wandering into forbidden labyrinths, and soaring beyond its sphere, as if determined to leave none of the Divine secrets unscrutinized or unexplored. As we see multitudes every where guilty of this arrogance and presumption, and among them some who are not censurable in other respects, it is proper to admonish them of the bounds of their duty on this subject. First, then; let them remember that when they inquire into predestination, they penetrate the inmost recesses of Divine wisdom, where the careless and confident intruder will obtain no satisfaction to his curiosity, but will enter a labyrinth from which he will find no way to depart. For it is unreasonable that man should scrutinize with impunity those things which the Lord hath determined to be hidden in himself; and investigate, even from eternity, that sublimity of wisdom which God would have us to adore and not comprehend, to promote our admiration of his glory. The secrets of his will which he determined to reveal to us, he discovers in his word; and these are all that he foresaw would concern us, or conduce to our advantage.

II. "We are come into the way of faith," says Augustine; "let us constantly pursue it. It conducts into the king's palace, in which are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. For the Lord Christ himself envied not his great and most select disciples when he said, 'I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.' We must walk, we must improve, we must grow, that our hearts may be able to understand those things of which we are at present incapable. If the last day finds us improving, we shall then learn what we never could learn in the present state." If we only consider that the word of the Lord is the only way to lead us to an investigation of all that ought to be believed concerning him, and the only light to enlighten us to behold all that ought to be seen

of him, this consideration will easily restrain and preserve us from all presumption. For we shall know that when we have exceeded the limits of the word, we shall get into a devious and darksome course, in which errors, slips, and falls, will often be inevitable. Let us then, in the first place, bear in mind, that to desire any other knowledge of predestination than what is unfolded in the word of God, indicates as great folly, as a wish to walk through unpassable roads, or to see in the dark. Nor let us be ashamed to be ignorant of some things relative to a subject in which there is a kind of learned ignorance. Rather let us abstain with cheerfulness from the pursuit of that knowledge, the affectation of which is foolish, dangerous, and even fatal. But if we are stimulated by the wantonness of intellect, we must oppose it with a reflection calculated to repress it, that as "it is not good to eat much honey, so for men to search their own glory, is not glory." (h) For there is sufficient to deter us from that presumption, which can only precipitate us into ruin.

III. Others, desirous of remedying this evil, will have all mention of predestination to be as it were buried; they teach men to avoid every question concerning it as they would a precipice. Though their moderation is to be commended, in judging that mysteries ought to be handled with such great sobriety; yet as they descend too low, they have little influence on the mind of man, which refuses to submit to unreasonable restraints. To observe, therefore the legitimate boundary on this side also, we must recur to the word of the Lord, which affords a certain rule for the understanding. For the Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which, as nothing necessary and useful to be known is omitted, so nothing is taught which it is not beneficial to know. Whatever, therefore, is declared in the Scripture concerning predestination, we must be cautious not to withhold from the faithful, lest we appear either to defraud them of the favour of their God, or to reprove and censure the Holy Spirit for publishing what it would be useful by any means to suppress. Let us, I say, permit the Christian man to open his heart and his ears to all the discourses ad-

(h) Prov. xxv. 27.

dressed to him by God, only with this moderation, that as soon as the Lord closes his sacred mouth, he shall also desist from farther inquiry. This will be the best barrier of sobriety, if in learning we not only follow the leadings of God, but as soon as he ceases to teach, we give up our desire of learning. Nor is the danger they dread, sufficient to divert our attention from the oracles of God. It is a celebrated observation of Solomon, that "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing." (i) But, as both piety and common sense suggest that this is not to be understood generally of every thing, we must seek for the proper distinction, lest we content ourselves with brutish ignorance under the pretext of modesty and sobriety. Now this distinction is clearly expressed in a few words by Moses: "The secret things," he says, "belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." (k) For we see how he enforces on the people attention to the doctrine of the law only by the celestial decree, because it pleased God to promulgate it; and restrains the same people within those limits with this single reason, that it is not lawful for mortals to intrude into the secrets of God.

IV. Profane persons, I confess, suddenly lay hold of something relating to the subject of predestination, to furnish occasion for objections, cavils, reproaches, and ridicule. But if we are frightened from it by their impudence, all the principal articles of the faith must be concealed, for there is scarcely one of them which such persons as these leave unviolated by blasphemy. The refractory mind will discover as much insolence, on hearing that there are three persons in the Divine essence, as on being told, that when God created man, he foresaw what would happen concerning him. Nor will they refrain from derision on being informed, that little more than five thousand years have elapsed since the creation of the world. They will ask, why the power of God was so long idle and asleep? Nothing can be advanced which they will not endeavour to ridicule. Must we, in order to check these sacrileges, say nothing of the Divinity of the Son and Spirit, or pass over in silence the

(i) Prov. xxv. 2.

(k) Deut. xxix. 29.

creation of the world? In this instance and every other, the truth of God is too powerful to dread the detraction of impious men; as is strenuously maintained by Augustine, in his treatise on the Perseverance of the faithful. We see, the false apostles, with all their defamation and accusation of the true doctrine of Paul, could never succeed to make him ashamed of it. Their assertion, that all this discussion is dangerous to pious minds, because it is inconsistent with exhortations, shakes their faith, and disturbs and discourages the heart itself, is without any foundation. Augustine admits, that he was frequently blamed on these accounts, for preaching predestination too freely, but he readily and amply refutes them. But as many and various absurdities are crowded upon us here, we prefer reserving every one to be refuted in its proper place. I only desire this general admission, that we should neither scrutinize those things which the Lord hath left concealed, nor neglect those which he hath openly exhibited, lest we be condemned for excessive curiosity on the one hand, or for ingratitude on the other. For it is judiciously remarked by Augustine, that we may safely follow the Scripture, which proceeds as with the pace of a mother stooping to the weakness of a child, that it may not leave our weak capacities behind. But persons who are so cautious or timid, as to wish predestination to be buried in silence, lest feeble minds should be disturbed; with what pretext, I ask, will they gloss over their arrogance, which indirectly charges God with foolish inadvertency, as though he foresaw not the danger which they suppose they have had the penetration to discover. Whoever, therefore, endeavours to raise prejudices against the doctrine of predestination, openly reproaches God, as though something had inconsiderately escaped from him that is pernicious to the Church.

V. Predestination, by which God adopts some to the hope of life, and adjudges others to eternal death, no one, desirous of the credit of piety, dares absolutely to deny. But it is involved in many cavils, especially by those who make foreknowledge the cause of it. We maintain, that both belong to God; but it is preposterous to represent one as dependent on the other. When we attribute foreknowledge to God, we mean that all things have ever been, and perpetually remain before

his eyes, so that to his knowledge nothing is future or past, but all things are present: and present in such a manner, that he does not merely conceive of them from ideas formed in his mind, as things remembered by us appear present to our minds, but really beholds and sees them as if actually placed before him. And this foreknowledge extends to the whole world and to all the creatures. Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which he hath determined in himself, what he would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is fore-ordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is predestinated either to life or to death. This, God hath not only testified in particular persons, but hath given a specimen of it in the whole posterity of Abraham, which should evidently shew the future condition of every nation to depend upon his decision. "When the Most High divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, the Lord's portion was his people; Jacob was the lot of his inheritance." (l) The separation is before the eyes of all: in the person of Abraham, as in the dry trunk of a tree, one people is peculiarly chosen to the rejection of others: no reason for this appears, except that Moses, to deprive their posterity of all occasion of glorying, teaches them that their exaltation is wholly from God's gratuitous love. He assigns this reason for their deliverance, that "he loved their fathers, and chose their seed after them." (m) More fully in another chapter, "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; but because the Lord loved you." (n) He frequently repeats the same admonition: "Behold the heaven is the Lord's thy God, the earth also with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them." (o) In another place, sanctification is enjoined upon them, because they were chosen to be a peculiar people. (p) And again elsewhere, love is asserted to be the cause of their protection. It is declared by the united voice of the faithful; "He hath chosen our

(l) Deut. xxxii. 8, 9.

(m) Deut. iv. 37.

(n) Deut. vii. 7, 8.

(o) Deut. x. 14, 15.

(p) Deut. xxiii.

inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved.” (q) For the gifts conferred on them by God, they all ascribe to gratuitous love, not only from a consciousness that these were not obtained by any merit of theirs, but from a conviction, that the holy patriarch himself was not endued with such excellence as to acquire the privilege of so great an honour for himself and his posterity. And the more effectually to demolish all pride, he reproaches them with having deserved no favour, being “a stiffnecked and rebellious people.” (r) The prophets also frequently reproach the Jews with the unwelcome mention of this election, because they had shamefully departed from it. Let them, however, now come forward, who wish to restrict the election of God to the desert of men, or the merit of works. When they see one nation preferred to all others, when they hear that God had no inducement to be more favourable to a few, and ignoble, and even disobedient and obstinate people; will they quarrel with him because he has chosen to give such an example of mercy? But their obstreperous clamours will not impede his work, nor will the reproaches they hurl against Heaven, injure or affect his justice; they will rather recoil upon their own heads. Tot his principle of the gracious covenant, the Israelites are also recalled whenever thanks are to be rendered to God, or their hopes are to be raised for futurity. “He hath made us, and not we ourselves,” says the Psalmist: “We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.” (s) It is not without reason that the negation is added, “not we ourselves,” that they may know that of all the benefits they enjoy, God is not only the Author, but derived the cause from himself, there being nothing in them deserving of such great honour. He also enjoins them to be content with the mere good pleasure of God, in these words; “O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye seed of Jacob his chosen.” And after having recounted the continual benefits bestowed by God as fruits of election, he at length concludes that he had acted with such liberality, “because he remembered his covenant.” (t) Consistent with this doctrine is the song of the whole Church; “Thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, gave our fathers the land, be-

(q) Psalm xlvii. 4.

(s) Psalm c. 3.

(r) Deut. ix. 6, 7.

(t) Psalm cv. 6, 8.

cause thou hadst a favour unto them.” (u) It must be observed, that where mention is made of the land, it is a visible symbol of the secret separation, which comprehends adoption. David, in another place, exhorts the people to the same gratitude; “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord: and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.” (x) Samuel animates to a good hope; “The Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name’s sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people.” (y) David, when his faith is assailed, thus arms himself for the conflict; “Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causest to approach unto thee; he shall dwell in thy courts.” (z) But since the election hidden in God has been confirmed by the first deliverance, as well as by the second and other intermediate blessings, the word *choose* is transferred to it in Isaiah; “The Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel:” (a) because, contemplating a future period, he declares that the collection of the residue of the people, whom he had appeared to have forsaken, would be a sign of the stable and sure election, which had likewise seemed to fail. When he says also, in another place, “I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away,” (b) he commends the continual course of his signal liberality and paternal benevolence. The angel, in Zechariah, speaks more plainly: “The Lord shall choose Jerusalem again:” (c) as though his severe chastisement had been a rejection, or their exile had been an interruption of election; which, nevertheless, remains inviolable, though the tokens of it are not always visible.

VI. We must now proceed to a second degree of election, still more restricted, or that in which the Divine grace was displayed in a more special manner, when of the same race of Abraham God rejected some, and by nourishing others in the Church, proved that he retained them among his children. Ishmael at first obtained the same station as his brother Isaac, for the spiritual covenant was equally sealed in him by the symbol of circumcision. He is cut off; afterwards Esau; lastly, an innumerable multitude, and almost all Israel. In Isaac the seed was called: the same calling continued in Jacob. God exhi-

(u) Psalm xliv. 3. (x) Psalm xxxiii. 12. (y) 1 Sam. xii. 22. (z) Psalm lxxv. 4.
 (a) Isaiah xiv. 1. (b) Isaiah xli. 9. (c) Zech. ii. 12.

bited a similar example in the rejection of Saul, which is magnificently celebrated by the Psalmist; "He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; but chose the tribe of Judah;" (d) and this the sacred history frequently repeats, that the wonderful secret of Divine grace may be more manifest in that change. I grant, it was by their own crime and guilt that Ishmael, Esau, and persons of similar characters, fell from the adoption; because the condition annexed was, that they should faithfully keep the covenant of God, which they perfidiously violated. Yet it was a peculiar favour of God, that he deigned to prefer them to other nations, as it is said in the Psalms; "He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them." (e) But I have justly said that here are two degrees to be remarked; for in the election of the whole nation, God hath already shewn that in his mere goodness he is bound by no laws, but is perfectly free, so that none can require of him an equal distribution of grace, the inequality of which demonstrates it to be truly gratuitous. Therefore Malachi aggravates the ingratitude of Israel, because, though not only elected out of the whole race of mankind, but also separated from a sacred family to be a peculiar people, they perfidiously and impiously despised God their most beneficent Father. "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau." (f) For God takes it for granted, since both were sons of a holy father, successors of the covenant, and branches from a sacred root, that the children of Jacob were already laid under more than common obligations by their admission to that honour; but Esau the first-born having been rejected, and their father, though inferior by birth, having been made the heir, he proves them guilty of double ingratitude, and complains of their violating this two-fold claim.

VII. Though it is sufficiently clear, that God in his secret counsel freely chooses whom he will, and rejects others, his gratuitous election is but half displayed till we come to particular individuals, to whom God not only offers salvation, but assigns it in such a manner, that the certainty of the effect is

(d) Psalm lxxviii. 67, 68.

(e) Psalm clxvii. 20.

(f) Mal. i. 2, 3.

liable to no suspense or doubt. These are included in that one seed mentioned by Paul: for though the adoption was deposited in the hand of Abraham, yet many of his posterity being cut off as putrid members, in order to maintain the efficacy and stability of election it is necessary to ascend to the head, in whom their heavenly Father hath bound his elect to each other, and united them to himself by an indissoluble bond. Thus the adoption of the family of Abraham displayed the favour of God, which he denied to others; but in the members of Christ there is a conspicuous exhibition of the superior efficacy of grace; because, being united to their head, they never fail of salvation. Paul, therefore, justly reasons from the passage of Malachi which I have just quoted, that where God, introducing the covenant of eternal life, invites any people to himself, there is a peculiar kind of election as to part of them, so that he does not efficaciously choose all with indiscriminate grace. The declaration, "Jacob have I loved," respects the whole posterity of the patriarch, whom the prophet there opposes to the descendants of Esau. Yet this is no objection to our having in the person of one individual a specimen of the election, which can never fail of attaining its full effect. These, who truly belong to Christ, Paul correctly observes, are called "a remnant;" for experience proves, that of a great multitude the most part fall away and disappear, so that often only a small portion remains. That the general election of a people is not always effectual and permanent, a reason readily presents itself, because when God covenants with them, he does not also give them the spirit of regeneration to enable them to persevere in the covenant to the end; but the external change, without the internal efficacy of grace, which would be sufficient for their preservation, is a kind of medium between the rejection of all mankind and the election of the small number of the faithful. The whole nation of Israel was called "God's inheritance," though many of them were strangers; but God, having firmly covenanted to be their Father and Redeemer, regards that gratuitous favour rather than the defection of multitudes; by whom his truth was not violated, because his preservation of a certain remnant to himself, made it evident that his calling was without repentance. For God's collection of a Church for himself

from time to time from the children of Abraham, rather than from the profane nations, was in consideration of his covenant, which, being violated by the multitude, he restricted to a few, to prevent its total failure. Lastly, the general adoption of the seed of Abraham was a visible representation of a greater blessing, which God conferred on a few out of the multitude. This is the reason that Paul so carefully distinguishes the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh, from his spiritual children called after the example of Isaac. Not that the mere descent from Abraham was a vain and unprofitable thing, which could not be asserted without depreciating the covenant; but because to the latter alone the immutable counsel of God, in which he predestinated whom he would, was of itself effectual to salvation. But I advise my readers to adopt no prejudice on either side, till it shall appear from adduced passages of Scripture what sentiments ought to be entertained. In conformity, therefore, to the clear doctrine of the Scripture, we assert, that **[**by an eternal and immutable counsel, God hath once for all determined, both whom he would admit to salvation, and whom he would condemn to destruction. We affirm that this counsel, as far as concerns the elect, is founded on his gratuitous mercy, totally irrespective of human merit: but that to those whom he devotes to condemnation, the gate of life is closed by a just and irreprehensible, but incomprehensible, judgment. In the elect, we consider calling as an evidence of election, and justification as another token of its manifestation, till they arrive in glory, which constitutes its completion. As God seals his elect by vocation and justification, so by excluding the reprobate from the knowledge of his name and the sanctification of his Spirit, he affords an indication of the judgment that awaits them.] Here I shall pass over many fictions fabricated by foolish men to overthrow predestination. It is unnecessary to refute things which, as soon as they are advanced, sufficiently prove their own falsehood. I shall dwell only on those things which are subjects of controversy among the learned, or which may occasion difficulty to simple minds, or which impiety speciously pleads in order to stigmatize the Divine justice.

CHAPTER XXII.

Testimonies of Scripture in Confirmation of this Doctrine.

ALL the positions we have advanced are controverted by many, especially the gratuitous election of the faithful, which nevertheless cannot be shaken. It is a notion commonly entertained, that God, foreseeing what would be the respective merits of every individual, makes a correspondent distinction between different persons; that he adopts as his children such as he foreknows will be deserving of his grace; and devotes to the damnation of death others whose dispositions he sees will be inclined to wickedness and impiety. Thus they not only obscure election by covering it with the veil of foreknowledge, but pretend that it originates in another cause. Nor is this commonly-received notion the opinion of the vulgar only, for it has had great advocates in all ages: which I candidly confess, that no one may cherish a confidence of injuring our cause by opposing us with their names. For the truth of God on this point is too certain to be shaken, too clear to be overthrown by the authority of men. Others, neither acquainted with the Scripture, nor deserving of any attention, oppose the sound doctrine with extreme presumption and intolerable effrontery. God's sovereign election of some, and preterition of others, they make the subject of formal accusation against him. But if this is the known fact, what will they gain by quarrelling with God? We teach nothing but what experience has proved, that God hath always been at liberty to bestow his grace on whom he chooses. I will not inquire how the posterity of Abraham excelled other nations, unless it was by that favour, the cause of which can only be found in God. Let them answer why they are men, and not oxen or asses; when it was in God's power to create them dogs, he formed them after his own image. Will they allow the brute animals to expostulate with God respecting their condition, as though the distinction were unjust? Their enjoyment of a privilege which they have acquired by no merits, is certainly no more reasonable than God's various distri-

bution of his favours according to the measure of his judgment. If they make a transition to persons where the inequality is more offensive to them, the example of Christ at least ought to deter them from carelessly prating concerning this sublime mystery. A mortal man is conceived of the seed of David: to the merit of what virtues will they ascribe his being made, even in the womb, the Head of angels, the only-begotten Son of God, the Image and Glory of the Father, the Light of righteousness and Salvation of the world? It is judiciously remarked by Augustine, that there is the brightest example of gratuitous election in the Head of the Church himself, that it may not perplex us in the members; that he did not become the Son of God by leading a righteous life, but was gratuitously invested with this high honour, that he might afterwards render others partakers of the gifts bestowed upon him. If any one inquire, why others are not all that he was, or why we are all at such a vast distance from him; why we are all corrupt, and he purity itself; he will betray both folly and impudence. But if they persist in the wish to deprive God of the uncontrollable right of choosing and rejecting, let them also take away what is given to Christ. Now it is of importance to attend to what the Scripture declares respecting every individual. Paul's assertion, that we were "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world," (g) certainly precludes any consideration of merit in us; for it is as though he had said; Our heavenly Father, finding nothing worthy of his choice in all the posterity of Adam, turned his views towards his Christ, to choose members from his body whom he would admit to the fellowship of life. Let the faithful, then, be satisfied with this reason, that we were adopted in Christ to the heavenly inheritance, because in ourselves we were incapable of such high dignity. He has a similar remark in another place, where he exhorts the Colossians to "give things unto the Father, who had made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints." (h) If election precedes this grace of God, which makes us meet to obtain the glory of the life to come, what will God find in us to induce him to elect us? Another passage from this apostle will still

(g) Ephes. i. 4.

(h) Col. i. 12.

more clearly express my meaning; "He hath chosen us," he says, "before the foundation of the world, according to the good pleasure of his will, that we should be holy, and without blame before him:" (i) where he opposes the good pleasure of God to all our merits whatsoever.

II. To render the proof more complete, it will be useful to notice all the clauses of that passage, which, taken in connection, leave no room for doubt. By the appellation of the *elect*, or *chosen*, he certainly designates the faithful, as he soon after declares: wherefore it is corrupting the term by a shameful fiction to restrict it to the age in which the gospel was published. By saying that they were elected before the creation of the world, he precludes every consideration of merit. For what could be the reason for discrimination between those who yet had no existence, and whose condition was afterwards to be the same in Adam? Now if they are chosen in Christ, it follows, not only that each individual is chosen out of himself, but also that some are separated from others; for it is evident, that all are not members of Christ. The next clause, stating them to have been "chosen that they might be holy," fully refutes the error which derives election from foreknowledge; since Paul, on the contrary, declares that all the virtue discovered in men is the effect of election. If any inquiry be made after a superior cause, Paul replies that God thus "predestinated," and that it was "according to the good pleasure of his will." This overturns any means of election which men imagine in themselves; for all the benefits conferred by God for the spiritual life, he represents as flowing from this one source, that God elected whom he would, and, before they were born, laid up in reserve for them the grace with which he determined to favour them.

III. Wherever this decree of God reigns, there can be no consideration of any works. The antithesis, indeed, is not pursued here; but it must be understood, as amplified by the same writer in another place. "Who hath called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the

(i) Ephes. i. 4, 5.

world began.” (*k*) And we have already shewn that the following clause, “that we should be holy,” removes every difficulty. For say, Because he foresaw they would be holy, therefore he chose them, and you will invert the order of Paul. We may safely infer, then; If he chose us that we should be holy, his foresight of our future holiness was not the cause of his choice. For these two propositions, That the holiness of the faithful is the fruit of election, and That they attain it by means of works, are incompatible with each other. Nor is there any force in the cavil to which they frequently resort, that the grace of election was not God’s reward of antecedent works, but his gift to future ones. For when it is said, that the faithful were elected that they should be holy, it is fully implied, that the holiness they were in future to possess had its origin in election. And what consistency would there be in asserting, that things derived from election were the causes of election. A subsequent clause seems farther to confirm what he had said, “according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself.” (*l*) For the assertion, that God purposed in himself, is equivalent to saying, that he considered nothing out of himself, with any view to influence his determination. Therefore he immediately subjoins, that the great and only object of our election is, “that we should be to the praise of” Divine “grace.” Certainly the grace of God deserves not the sole praise of our election, unless this election be gratuitous. Now it could not be gratuitous, if, in choosing his people, God himself considered what would be the nature of their respective works. The declaration of Christ to his disciples, therefore, is universally applicable to all the faithful; “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you:” (*m*) which not only excludes past merits, but signifies that they had nothing in themselves to cause their election, independently of his preventing mercy. This also is the meaning of that passage of Paul, “Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?” (*n*) For his design is to shew, that God’s goodness altogether anticipates men, finding nothing in them, either past or future, to conciliate his favour towards them.

(*k*) 2 Tim. i. 9.(*l*) Ephes. i. 9.(*m*) John xv. 16.(*n*) Rom. xi. 35.

IV. In the Epistle to the Romans, where he goes to the bottom of this argument, and pursues it more at length, he says, "They are not all Israel which are" born "of Israel:"(o) because though all were blessed by hereditary right, yet the succession did not pass to all alike. This controversy originated in the pride and vain-glorying of the Jewish people, who claiming for themselves the title of the Church, would make the faith of the gospel to depend on their decision. Just as in the present day, the Papists with this false pretext would substitute themselves in the place of God. Paul, though he admits the posterity of Abraham to be holy in consequence of the covenant, yet contends that most of them are strangers to it; and that not only because they degenerate, from legitimate children becoming spurious ones; but because the pre-eminence and sovereignty belong to God's special election, which is the sole foundation of the validity of their adoption. If some were established in the hope of salvation by their own piety, and the rejection of others were owing wholly to their own defection; Paul's reference of his readers to the secret election would indeed be weak and absurd. Now if the will of God, of which no cause appears or must be sought out of himself, discriminates some from others, so that the children of Israel are not all true Israelites, it is in vain pretended that the condition of every individual originates with himself. He pursues the subject further under the example of Jacob and Esau; for being both children of Abraham, and both enclosed in their mother's womb, the transfer of the honour of primogeniture to Jacob was by a preternatural change, which Paul, however, contends indicated the election of the one and the reprobation of the other. The origin and the cause are inquired, which the champions of foreknowledge maintain to be exhibited in the virtues and the vices of men. For this is their short and easy doctrine, That God hath shewed in the person of Jacob, that he elects such as are worthy of his grace; and in the person of Esau, that he rejects those whom he foresees to be unworthy. This indeed they assert with confidence; but what is the testimony of Paul? "The children being not yet born, neither having done any

(o) Rom. ix. 6.

good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said, The elder shall serve the younger: as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."(*p*) If this distinction between the brothers was influenced by foreknowledge, the mention of the time must certainly be unnecessary. On the supposition that Jacob was elected, because that honour was acquired by his future virtues, to what purpose could Paul remark that he was not yet born? It would not have been so proper to add, that he had not yet done any good: for it will be immediately replied, that nothing is concealed from God, and therefore the piety of Jacob must have been present before him. If grace be the reward of works, they ought to have had their just value attributed to them before Jacob was born, as much as if he were already grown to maturity. But the apostle proceeds in unravelling the difficulty, and teaches that the adoption of Jacob flowed not from works, but from the calling of God. In speaking of works, he introduces no time, future or past, but positively opposes them to the calling of God, intending the establishment of the one, and the absolute subversion of the other: as though he had said, We must consider the good pleasure of God, and not the productions of men. Lastly, the very terms, *election* and *purpose*, certainly exclude from this subject all the causes frequently invented by men, independently of God's secret counsel.

V. Now what pretexts will be urged to obscure these arguments, by those who attribute to works, either past or future, any influence on election? For this is nothing but an evasion of the apostle's argument, that the distinction between the two brothers depends not on any consideration of works, but on the mere calling of God, because it was fixed between them when they were not yet born. Nor would their subtilty have escaped him, if there had been any solidity in it: but well knowing the impossibility of God's foreseeing any good in man, except what he had first determined to bestow by the benefit of his election, he resorts not to the preposterous order of placing good works before their cause. We have the apostle's

authority that the salvation of the faithful is founded solely on the decision of Divine election, and that that favour is not procured by works, but proceeds from gratuitous calling. We have also a lively exhibition of this truth in a particular example. Jacob and Esau are brothers, begotten of the same parents, still enclosed in the same womb, not yet brought forth into light; there is in all respects a perfect equality between them; yet the judgment of God concerning them is different. For he takes one, and rejects the other. The primogeniture was the only thing that gave one a right of priority to the other. But that also is passed by, and on the younger is bestowed what is refused to the elder. In other instances, also, God appears always to have treated primogeniture with designed and decided contempt, to cut off from the flesh all occasion of boasting. He rejects Ishmael, and favours Isaac. He degrades Manasseh, and honours Ephraim.

VI. If it be objected, that from these inferior and inconsiderable benefits, it must not be concluded respecting the life to come, that he who has been raised to the honour of primogeniture is therefore to be considered as adopted to the inheritance of heaven; for there are many who spare not Paul, as though in his citation of Scripture testimonies he had perverted them from their genuine meaning; I answer as before, that the apostle has neither erred through inadvertency, nor wilfully perverted testimonies of Scripture. But he saw, what they cannot bear to consider, that God intended by an earthly symbol to declare the spiritual election of Jacob, which otherwise lay concealed behind his inaccessible tribunal. For unless the primogeniture granted him had reference to the future world, it was a vain and ridiculous kind of blessing, which produced him nothing but various afflictions and adversities, grievous exile, numerous cares, and bitter sorrows. Discerning, beyond all doubt, that God's external blessing was an indication of the spiritual and permanent blessing he had prepared for his servant in his kingdom, Paul hesitated not to argue from the former in proof of the latter. It must also be remembered, that to the land of Canaan was annexed the pledge of the celestial residence; so that it ought not to be doubted that Jacob was ingrafted with angels into the body of Christ, that he might be a partaker

of the same life. While Esau is rejected, therefore, Jacob is elected, and distinguished from him by God's predestination, without any difference of merit. If you inquire the cause, the apostle assigns the following; "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." (*q*) And what is this but a plain declaration of the Lord, that he finds no cause in men to induce him to shew favour to them, but derives it solely from his own mercy; and therefore that the salvation of his people is his work? When God fixes your salvation in himself alone, why will you descend into yourself? When he assigns you his mere mercy, why will you have recourse to your own merits? When he confines all your attention to his mercy, why will you divert part of it to the contemplation of your own works? We must therefore come to that more select people, whom Paul in another place tells us "God foreknew," (*r*) not using this word according to the fancy of our opponents, to signify a prospect from a place of idle observation, of things which he has no part in transacting, but in the sense in which it is frequently used. For certainly, when Peter says that Christ was "delivered" to death "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," (*s*) he introduces God not as a mere spectator, but as the Author of our salvation. So the same apostle, by calling the faithful to whom he writes, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God," (*t*) properly expresses that secret predestination by which God hath marked out whom he would as his children. And the word *purpose*, which is added as a synonymous term, and in common speech is always expressive of fixed determination, undoubtedly implies that God, as the Author of our salvation, does not go out of himself. In this sense Christ is called, in the same chapter, the "Lamb foreknown before the foundation of the world." For what can be more absurd or uninteresting, than God's looking from on high to see from what quarter salvation would come to mankind? The people therefore whom Paul describes as "foreknown," (*u*) are no other than a small number scattered among

(*q*) Rom. ix. 15.(*r*) Rom. xi. 2.(*s*) Acts ii. 23.(*t*) 1 Peter i. 2.(*u*) Rom. xi. 2.

the multitude, who falsely pretend to be the people of God. In another place also, to repress the boasting of hypocrites assuming before the world the pre-eminence among the faithful, Paul declares, "The Lord knoweth them that are his." (x) Lastly, by this expression Paul designates two classes of people, one consisting of the whole race of Abraham, the other separated from it, reserved under the eyes of God, and concealed from the view of men. And this without doubt he gathered from Moses, who asserts that God will be merciful to whom he will be merciful; though he is speaking of the chosen people, whose condition was to outward appearance all alike; as though he had said, that the common adoption includes in it peculiar grace towards some, who resemble a more sacred treasure: that the common covenant prevents not this small number being exempted from the common lot; and that, determined to represent himself as the uncontrolled dispenser and arbiter in this affair, he positively denies that he will have mercy on one rather than another, from any other motive than his own pleasure: because when mercy meets a person who seeks it, though he suffers no repulse, yet he either anticipates or in some degree obtains for himself that favour, of which God claims to himself all the praise.

VII. Now let the supreme Master and Judge decide the whole matter. Beholding in his hearers such extreme obduracy, that his discourses were scattered among the multitude almost without any effect, to obviate this offence, he exclaims, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me. And this is the Father's will, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing." (y) Observe, the origin is from the donation of the Father, that we may be given into the custody and protection of Christ. Here perhaps some one may argue in a circle, and object, that none are considered as the Father's peculiar people, but those whose surrender has been voluntary, arising from faith. But Christ only insists on this point; that notwithstanding the defections of vast multitudes, shaking the whole world, yet the counsel of God will be stable and firmer than the heavens, so that election can never fail. They are said to have been the

(x) 2 Tim. ii. 19.

(y) John vi. 37, 39.

elect of the Father, before he gave them to his only-begotten Son. Is it inquired whether this was by nature? No, he draws those who were strangers, and so makes them his children. The language of Christ is too clear to be perplexed by the quibbles of sophistry: "No man can come to me, except the Father draw him. Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (z) If all men promiscuously submitted to Christ, election would be common: now the fewness of believers discovers a manifest distinction. Having asserted his disciples therefore, who were given to him, to be the peculiar portion of the Father, Christ a little after adds, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine:" (a) which shews that the whole world does not belong to its Creator; only that grace delivers from the curse and wrath of God, and from eternal death, a few who would otherwise perish, but leaves the world in its destruction to which it has been destined. At the same time, though Christ introduces himself in his mediatorial capacity, yet he claims to himself the right of election, in common with the Father. "I speak not of all," he says; "I know whom I have chosen." (b) If it be inquired whence he chose them; he elsewhere answers, "out of the world," (c) which he excludes from his prayers, when he commends his disciples to the Father. It must be admitted, that when Christ asserts his knowledge of whom he has chosen, it refers to a particular class of mankind, and that they are distinguished, not by the nature of their virtues, but by the decree of heaven. Whence it follows, that none attain any excellence by their own ability or industry, since Christ represents himself as the author of election. His enumeration of Judas among the elect, though he was a devil, only refers to the apostolical office, which, though an illustrious instance of the Divine favour, as Paul so frequently acknowledges in his own person, yet does not include the hope of eternal salvation. Judas, therefore, in his unfaithful exercise of the apostleship, might be worse than a devil; but of those whom Christ has once united to his body, he will never suffer one to perish: for in securing their salvation, he will perform what he has pro-

(z) John vi. 44, 45. (a) John xvii. 9. (b) John xiii. 18. (c) John xv. 19.

mised, by exerting the power of God, who is greater than all. What he says in another place, "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition," is a rhetorical mode of expression, called *catachresis*, but the sense is sufficiently plain. The conclusion is, that God creates whom he chooses to be his children by gratuitous adoption; that the cause of this is wholly in himself; because he exclusively regards his own secret determination.

VIII. But, it will be said, Ambrose, Origen, and Jerome believed that God dispenses his grace among men, according to his foreknowledge of the good use which every individual will make of it. Augustine also was once of the same sentiment; but when he had made a greater proficiency in scriptural knowledge, he not only retracted, but powerfully confuted it. And after his retraction, rebuking the Pelagians for persisting in this error, he says, "Who but must wonder that this most ingenious sense should escape the apostle? For after proposing what was calculated to excite astonishment respecting those children yet unborn, he started to himself, by way of objection, the following question, What then, is there unrighteousness with God? It was the place for him to answer, that God foresaw the merits of each of them; yet he says nothing of this, but resorts to the decrees and mercy of God." And in another place, after having discarded all merits antecedent to election, he says, "Here undoubtedly falls to the ground the vain reasoning of those who defend the foreknowledge of God in opposition to his grace, and affirm that we were elected before the foundation of the world, because God foreknew that we would be good, not that he himself would make us good. This is not the language of him, who says, 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' (d) For if he elected us because he foreknew our future good, he must also have foreknown our choice of him:" and more to the like purpose. The testimony should have weight with those who readily acquiesce in the authority of the Fathers. Though Augustine will not allow himself to be disunited from the rest, but shews by clear testimonies the falsehood of that discordance, with the odium

(d) John xv. 16.

of which he was loaded by the Pelagians, he makes the following quotations from Ambrose's book on Predestination. "Whom Christ has mercy on, him he calls. Those who were indevout he could, if he would, have made devout. But God calls whom he pleases, and makes whom he will religious." If I were inclined to compile a whole volume from Augustine, I could easily shew my readers, that I need no words but his; but I am unwilling to burden them with prolixity. But come, let us suppose them to be silent, let us attend to the subject itself. A difficult question was raised, Whether it was a just procedure in God to favour with his grace certain particular persons. This Paul could have decided by a single word, if he had pleaded the consideration of works. Why then does he not do this, but rather continue his discourse involved in the same difficulty? Why, but from necessity? for the Holy Spirit, who spoke by his mouth, never laboured under the malady of forgetfulness. Without any evasion or circumlocution, therefore, he answers, that God favours his elect because he will, and has mercy because he will. For this oracle, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy," (e) is equivalent to a declaration, that God is excited to mercy by no other motive than his own will to be merciful. The observation of Augustine therefore remains true, "that the grace of God does not find men fit to be elected, but makes them so."

IX. We shall not dwell upon the sophistry of Thomas Aquinas, "that the foreknowledge of merits is not the cause of predestination in regard to the act of him who predestinates; but that with regard to us, it may in some sense be so called, according to the particular consideration of predestination: as when God is said to predestinate glory for man according to merits, because he decreed to give him grace by which glory is merited." For since the Lord allows us to contemplate nothing in election but his mere goodness, the desire of any one to see any thing more is a preposterous disposition. But if we were inclined to a contention of subtilty, we should be at no loss to refute this petty sophism of Aquinas. He contends that glory

is in a certain sense predestinated for the elect according to their merits, because God predestinates to them the grace by which glory is merited. What if I, on the contrary, reply, that predestination to grace is subordinate to election to life, and attendant upon it? that grace is predestinated to those to whom the possession of glory has been already assigned: because it pleases the Lord to conduct his children from election to justification? For hence it will follow, that predestination to glory is rather the cause of predestination to grace, than the contrary. But let us dismiss these controversies; they are unnecessary with those who think they have wisdom enough in the word of God. For it was truly remarked by an ancient ecclesiastical writer, That they who ascribe God's election to merits, are wiser than they ought to be.

X. It is objected by some, that God will be inconsistent with himself, if he invites all men universally to come to him, and receives only a few elect. Thus, according to them, the universality of the promises destroys the discrimination of special grace: and this is the language of some moderate men, not so much for the sake of suppressing the truth, as to exclude thorny questions, and restrain the curiosity of many. The end is laudable, but the means cannot be approved; for disingenuous evasion can never be excused: but with those who use insult and invective, it is a foul cavil or a shameful error. How the Scripture reconciles these two facts, that by external preaching all are called to repentance and faith, and yet that the spirit of repentance and faith is not given to all, I have elsewhere stated, and shall soon have occasion partly to repeat. What they assume, I deny, as being false in two respects. For he who threatens drought to one city while it rains upon another, and who denounces to another place a famine of doctrine, (*f*) lays himself under no positive obligation to call all men alike. And he who, forbidding Paul to preach the word in Asia, and suffering him not to go into Bithynia, calls him into Macedonia, (*g*) demonstrates his right to distribute this treasure to whom he pleases. In Isaiah, he still more fully declares his destination of the promises of salvation exclusively for the elect: for of

(*f*) Amos iv. 7. viii. 11.

(*g*) Acts xvi. 6—10.

them only, and not indiscriminately of all mankind, he declares that they shall be his disciples. (*h*) Whence it appears, that when the doctrine of salvation is offered to all for their effectual benefit, it is a corrupt prostitution of that which is declared to be reserved particularly for the children of the Church. At present let this suffice, that though the voice of the gospel addresses all men generally, yet the gift of faith is bestowed on few. Isaiah assigns the cause, that "the arm of the Lord" is not "revealed" to all. (*i*) If he had said, that the gospel is wickedly and perversely despised, because many obstinately refuse to hear it; perhaps there would be some colour for this notion of the universal call. The design of the prophet is not to extenuate the guilt of men, when he states that the source of blindness is God's not deigning to reveal his arm to them; he only suggests that their ears are in vain assailed with external doctrine, because faith is a peculiar gift. I would wish to be informed by these teachers, whether men become children of God by mere preaching, or by faith. Surely, when John declares that all who believe in God's only-begotten Son, are themselves made the children of God, (*k*) this is not said of all the hearers of the word in a confused mass, but a particular rank is assigned to the faithful, "which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (*l*) But they say, there is a mutual agreement between faith and the word. This is the case wherever there is any faith; but it is no new thing for the seed to fall among thorns or in stony places; not only because most men are evidently in actual rebellion against God, but because they are not all endued with eyes and ears. Where then will be the consistency of God's calling to himself such as he knows will never come? Let Augustine answer for me: "Do you wish to dispute with me? Rather unite with me in admiration, and exclaim, O the depth! Let us both agree in fear, lest we perish in error." Besides, if election is, as Paul represents it, the parent of faith, I retort that argument upon them, that faith cannot be general, because election is special. For from the connection of causes and effects it is easily inferred, when Paul says, "God hath

(*h*) Isaiah viii. 16, &c. (*i*) Isaiah liii. 1. (*k*) John i. 12. (*l*) John i. 13.

blessed us with all spiritual blessings, according as he hath chosen us before the foundation of the world;" that therefore these treasures are not common to all, because God hath chosen only such as he pleased. This is the reason why, in another place, he commends "the faith of God's elect;" (m) that none may be supposed to acquire faith by any exertion of their own, but that God may retain the glory of freely illuminating the objects of his previous election. For Bernard justly observes, "Friends hear each one for himself when he addresses them, Fear not, little flock, for to you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of heaven. Who are these? Certainly those whom he hath foreknown and predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. The great and secret counsel has been revealed. The Lord hath known who are his, but what was known to God is manifested to men. Nor does he favour any others with the participation of so great a mystery, but those particular individuals whom he foreknew and predestinated to be his own." A little after he concludes, "The mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him; from everlasting in predestination, to everlasting in beatification; the one, the beginning; the other knowing no end." But what necessity is there for citing the testimony of Bernard, since we hear from the Master's own mouth, that "no man hath seen the Father save he which is of God," (n) which implies, that all who are not regenerated by God, are stupified with the splendour of his countenance. Faith indeed is properly connected with election, provided it occupies the second place. This order is clearly expressed in these words of Christ; "This is the Father's will, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which believeth on the Son, may have everlasting life." (o) If he willed the salvation of all, he would give them all into the custody of his Son, and unite them all to his body by the sacred bond of faith. Now it is evident, that faith is the peculiar pledge of his paternal love, reserved for his adopted children. Therefore Christ says in another place, "The sheep follow the shepherd, for they know his voice; and a

(m) Titus i. 1.

(n) John vi. 46.

(o) John vi. 39, 40.

stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." (*p*) Whence arises this difference, but because their ears are divinely penetrated? For no man makes himself a sheep, but is created such by heavenly grace. Hence also the Lord proves the perpetual certainty and security of our salvation, because it is kept by the invincible power of God. (*q*) Therefore he concludes that unbelievers are not his sheep, because they are not of the number of those whom God by Isaiah promised to him for his future disciples. (*r*) Moreover, the testimonies I have cited, being expressive of perseverance, are so many declarations of the invariable perpetuity of election.

XI. Now with respect to the reprobate, whom the apostle introduces in the same place: as Jacob, without any merit yet acquired by good works, is made an object of grace; so Esau, while yet unpolluted by any crime, is accounted an object of hatred. (*s*) If we turn our attention to works, we insult the apostle, as though he saw not that which is clear to us. Now that he saw none, is evident, because he expressly asserts the one to have been elected and the other rejected while they had not yet done any good or evil, to prove the foundation of Divine predestination not to be in works. (*t*) Secondly, when he raises the objection whether God is unjust, he never urges; what would have been the most absolute and obvious defence of his justice, that God rewarded Esau according to his wickedness; but contents himself with a different solution, that the reprobate are raised up for this purpose, that the glory of God may be displayed by their means. Lastly, he subjoins a concluding observation, that "God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." (*u*) You see how he attributes both to the mere will of God. If, therefore, we can assign no reason why he grants mercy to his people but because such is his pleasure, neither shall we find any other cause but his will for the reprobation of others. For when God is said to harden or shew mercy to whom he pleases, men are taught by this declaration to seek no cause beside his will.

(*p*) John x. 4, 5.(*q*) John x. 29.(*r*) John x. 26.(*s*) Rom. ix. 13.(*t*) Rom. ix. 11.(*u*) Rom. ix. 18.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A Refutation of the Calumnies, generally, but unjustly, urged against this Doctrine.

WHEN the human mind hears these things, its petulance breaks all restraint, and it discovers as serious and violent agitation as if alarmed by the sound of a martial trumpet. Many indeed, as if they wished to avert odium from God, admit election in such a way as to deny that any one is reprobated. But this is puerile and absurd, because election itself could not exist without being opposed to reprobation. God is said to separate those whom he adopts to salvation. To say, that others obtain by chance, or acquire by their own efforts, that which election alone confers on a few, will be worse than absurd. Whom God passes by, therefore, he reprobates, and from no other cause than his determination to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines for his children. And the petulance of men is intolerable, if it refuses to be restrained by the word of God, which treats of his incomprehensible counsel, adored by angels themselves. But now we have heard that hardening proceeds from the Divine power and will, as much as mercy. Unlike the persons I have mentioned, Paul never strives to excuse God by false allegations; he only declares that it is unlawful for a thing formed to quarrel with its maker. (x) Now how will those, who admit not that any are reprobated by God, evade this declaration of Christ; "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up?" (y) Upon all whom our heavenly Father hath not deigned to plant as sacred trees in his garden, they hear destruction plainly denounced. If they deny this to be a sign of reprobation, there is nothing so clear as to be capable of proof to such persons. But if they cease not their clamour, let the sobriety of faith be satisfied with this admonition of Paul, that there is no cause for quarrelling with God, if, on the one hand, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, he endures, "with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted

(x) Rom. ix. 20.

(y) Matt. xv. 13.

to destruction;" and, on the other, "makes known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, whom he had afore prepared unto glory." (z) Let the reader observe that, to preclude every pretext for murmurs and censures, Paul ascribes supreme dominion to the wrath and power of God; because it is unreasonable for those deep judgments, which absorb all our faculties, to be called in question by us. It is a frivolous reply of our adversaries, that God does not wholly reject the objects of his long-suffering, but remains in suspense towards them, awaiting the possibility of their repentance: as though Paul attributed patience to God, in expectation of the conversion of those whom he asserts to be fitted to destruction. For Augustine, in expounding this passage, where power is connected with patience, justly observes, that God's power is not permissive, but influential. They observe also, that it is not said without meaning, that the vessels of wrath are fitted to destruction, but that God prepared the vessels of mercy; since by this mode of expression, he ascribes and challenges to God the praise of salvation, and throws the blame of perdition upon those who by their choice procure it to themselves. But though I concede to them, that Paul softens the asperity of the former clause by the difference of phraseology, yet it is not at all consistent to transfer the preparation for destruction to any other than the secret counsel of God; which is also asserted just before in the context, that "God raised up Pharaoh, and whom he will he hardeneth." Whence it follows, that the cause of hardening is the secret counsel of God. This however I maintain, which is observed by Augustine, that when God turns wolves into sheep, he renovates them by more powerful grace to conquer their obduracy; and therefore the obstinate are not converted, because God exerts not that mightier grace, of which he is not destitute, if he chose to display it.

II. These things will amply suffice for persons of piety and modesty, who remember that they are men. But as these virulent adversaries are not content with one species of opposition, we will reply to them all as occasion shall require. Foolish mortals enter into many contentions with God, as though they

(z) Rom. ix. 22, 23,

could arraign him to plead to their accusations. In the first place they inquire, by what right the Lord is angry with his creatures who had not provoked him by any previous offence; for that, to devote to destruction whom he pleases, is more like the caprice of a tyrant than the lawful sentence of a judge; that men have reason, therefore, to expostulate with God, if they are predestinated to eternal death without any demerit of their own, merely by his sovereign will. If such thoughts ever enter the minds of pious men, they will be sufficiently enabled to break their violence by this one consideration, how exceedingly presumptuous it is only to inquire into the causes of the Divine will; which is in fact, and is justly entitled to be, the cause of every thing that exists. For if it has any cause, then there must be something antecedent, on which it depends; which it is impious to suppose. For the will of God is the highest rule of justice; so that what he wills must be considered just, for this very reason, because he wills it. When it is inquired, therefore, why the Lord did so, the answer must be, Because he would. But if you go further, and ask why he so determined, you are in search of something greater and higher than the will of God, which can never be found. Let human temerity, therefore, desist from seeking that which is not, lest it should fail of finding that which is. This will be a sufficient restraint to any one disposed to reason with reverence concerning the secrets of his God. Against the audaciousness of the impious, who are not afraid openly to rail against God, the Lord will sufficiently defend himself by his own justice without any vindication by us, when, depriving their consciences of every subterfuge, he shall convict them and bind them with a sense of their guilt. Yet we espouse not the notion of the Romish theologians concerning the absolute and arbitrary power of God, which, on account of its profaneness, deserves our detestation. We represent not God as lawless, who is a law to himself; because, as Plato says, laws are necessary to men who are the subjects of evil desires; but the will of God is not only pure from every fault, but the highest standard of perfection, even the law of all laws. But we deny that he is liable to be called to any account; we deny also that we are proper judges, deciding on this cause according to our own apprehen-

sion. Wherefore, if we attempt to go beyond what is lawful, let us be deterred by the Psalmist, who tells us, that God will be clear when he is judged by mortal man. (a)

III. Thus God is able to check his enemies by silence. But that we may not suffer them to deride his holy name with impunity, he supplies us from his word with arms against them. Therefore if any one attack us with such an inquiry as this, why God has from the beginning predestinated some men to death, who not yet being brought into existence could not yet deserve the sentence of death; we will reply by asking them in return, what they suppose God owes to man, if he chooses to judge of him from his own nature. As we are all corrupted by sin, we must necessarily be odious to God, and that not from tyrannical cruelty, but in the most equitable estimation of justice. If all whom the Lord predestinates to death are in their natural condition liable to the sentence of death, what injustice do they complain of receiving from him? Let all the sons of Adam come forward; let them all contend and dispute with their Creator, because by his eternal providence they were previously to their birth adjudged to endless misery. What murmur will they be able to raise against this vindication, when God, on the other hand, shall call them to a review of themselves. If they have all been taken from a corrupt mass, it is no wonder that they are subject to condemnation. Let them not, therefore, accuse God of injustice, if his eternal decree has destined them to death, to which they feel themselves, whatever be their desire or aversion, spontaneously led forward by their own nature. Hence appears the perverseness of their disposition to murmur, because they intentionally suppress the cause of condemnation, which they are constrained to acknowledge in themselves, hoping to excuse themselves by charging it upon God. But though I ever so often admit God to be the author of it, which is perfectly correct, yet this does not abolish the guilt impressed upon their consciences, and from time to time recurring to their view.

IV. They farther object, Were they not, by the decree of God, antecedently predestinated to that corruption which is

now stated as the cause of condemnation. When they perish in their corruption, therefore, they only suffer the punishment of that misery into which, in consequence of his predestination, Adam fell, and precipitated his posterity with him. Is he not unjust, therefore, in treating his creatures with such cruel mockery? I confess, indeed, that all the descendants of Adam fell by the Divine will into that miserable condition in which they are now involved; and this is what I asserted from the beginning, that we must always return at last to the sovereign determination of God's will, the cause of which is hidden in himself. But it follows not, therefore, that God is liable to this reproach. For we will answer them thus in the language of Paul; "O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?" (b) They will deny this to be in reality any vindication of God's justice, and call it a subterfuge, such as is commonly resorted to by persons destitute of a sufficient defence. For what appears to be the meaning of this, but that God possesses power that cannot be resisted, of doing any thing whatsoever according to his pleasure? But it is very different. For what stronger reason can be alleged then when we are directed to consider who God is? How could any injustice be committed by him who is the judge of the world? If it is the peculiar property of the nature of God to do justice, then he naturally loves righteousness and hates iniquity. The apostle, therefore, has not resorted to sophistry, as if he were in danger of confutation, but has shewn that the reason of the Divine justice is too high to be measured by a human standard, or comprehended by the littleness of the human mind. The apostle, indeed, acknowledges that there is a depth in the Divine judgments sufficient to absorb the minds of all mankind, if they attempt to penetrate it. But he also teaches how criminal it is to reduce the works of God to such a law, that on failing to discover the reason of them, we presume to censure them. It is a well-known observation of Solomon, though few rightly understand it, that "the

(b) Rom. ix. 20, 21.

great God that formed all things, both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors." (c) For he is proclaiming the greatness of God, whose will it is to punish fools and transgressors, although he favours them not with his Spirit. And men betray astonishing madness in desiring to comprehend immensity within the limits of their reason. The angels who stood in their integrity, Paul calls "elect;" (d) if their constancy rested on the Divine pleasure, the defection of the others argues their being forsaken; a fact for which no other cause can be assigned than the reprobation hidden in the secret counsel of God.

V. Now to any follower of Manes or Celestius, a calumniator of Divine Providence, I reply with Paul, that no account ought to be given of it, for its greatness far surpasses our understanding. What wonder or absurdity is there in this? Would he have the Divine power so limited, as to be unable to execute more than his little capacity can comprehend? I say, with Augustine, that the Lord created those who, he certainly foreknew, would fall into destruction, and that this was actually so because he willed it: but of his will it belongs not to us to demand the reason, which we are incapable of comprehending; nor is it reasonable that the Divine will should be made the subject of controversy with us, which, whenever it is discussed, is only another name for the highest rule of justice. Why then is any question started concerning injustice, where justice is evidently conspicuous? Nor let us be ashamed to follow the example of Paul, and stop the mouths of unreasonable and wicked men in this manner, repeating the same answer as often as they shall dare to repeat their complaints. Who are you, miserable mortals, preferring an accusation against God, because he accommodates not the greatness of his works to your ignorance? As though they were necessarily wrong, because they are concealed from carnal view. Of the immensity of God's judgments you have the clearest evidences. You know they are called "a great deep." Now examine your contracted intellects, whether they can comprehend God's secret decrees. What advantage or satisfaction do you gain from plunging yourselves, by your mad researches, into an abyss that reason

(c) Prov. xvi. 10.

(d) 1 Tim. v. 21.

itself pronounces will be fatal to you? Why are you not at least restrained by some fear of what is contained in the history of Job and the books of the prophets, concerning the inconceivable wisdom and terrible power of God? If your mind is disturbed, embrace without reluctance the advice of Augustine: "You, a man, expect an answer from me, who am also a man. Let us, therefore, both hear him, who says, O man, who art thou? Faithful ignorance is better than presumptuous knowledge. Seek merits; you will find nothing but punishment. O the depth! Peter denies; the thief believes; O the depth! Do you seek a reason? I will tremble at the depth. Do you reason? I will wonder. Do you dispute? I will believe. I see the depth, I reach not the bottom. Paul rested, because he found admiration. He calls the judgments of God unsearchable; and are you come to scrutinize them? He says, his ways are past finding out; and are you come to investigate them?" We shall do no good by proceeding any farther; it will not satisfy their petulance; and the Lord needs no other defence than what he hath employed by his Spirit, speaking by the mouth of Paul; and we forget to speak well when we cease to speak with God.

VI. Impiety produces also a second objection, which directly tends, not so much to the crimination of God, as to the vindication of the sinner; though the sinner whom God condemns, cannot be justified without the disgrace of the Judge. For this is their profane complaint, Why should God impute to the fault of man those things which were rendered necessary by his predestination? What should they do? Should they resist his decrees? This would be vain, for it would be impossible. Therefore they are not punished for those things of which God's predestination is the principal cause. Here I shall refrain from the defence commonly resorted to by ecclesiastical writers, that the foreknowledge of God prevents not man from being considered as a sinner, since God foresees man's evils, not his own. For then the cavil would not stop here, it would rather be urged, that still God might, if he would, have provided against the evils he foresaw, and that not having done this, he created man expressly to this end, that he might so conduct himself in the world: but if by the Divine Providence, man was created in such a state as afterwards to do whatever

he actually does; he ought not to be charged with guilt for things which he cannot avoid, and to which the will of God constrains him. Let us see then how this difficulty should be solved. In the first place, the declaration of Solomon ought to be universally admitted, that "the Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." (e) Observe; all things being at God's disposal, and the decision of salvation or death belonging to him, he orders all things by his counsel and decree in such a manner, that some men are born devoted from the womb to certain death, that his name may be glorified in their destruction. If any one pleads, that no necessity was imposed on them by the providence of God, but rather that they were created by him in such a state in consequence of his foresight of their future depravity; it will amount to nothing. The old writers used indeed to adopt this solution, though not without some degree of hesitation. But the schoolmen satisfy themselves with it, as though it admitted of no opposition. I will readily grant, indeed, that mere foreknowledge lays no necessity on the creatures, though this is not universally admitted, for there are some who maintain it to be the actual cause of what comes to pass. But Valla, a man otherwise not much versed in theology, appears to me to have discovered superior acuteness and judiciousness, by shewing that this controversy is unnecessary, because both life and death are acts of God's will rather than of his foreknowledge. If God simply foresaw the fates of men, and did not also dispose and fix them by his determination; there would be room to agitate the question, whether his providence or foresight rendered them at all necessary. But since he foresees future events only in consequence of his decree, that they shall happen; it is useless to contend about foreknowledge, while it is evident that all things come to pass rather by ordination and decree.

VII. They say it is nowhere declared in express terms, that God decreed Adam should perish by his defection. As though the same God whom the Scripture represents as doing whatever he pleases, created the noblest of his creatures without

(e) Prov. xvi. 4.

any determinate end. They maintain, that he was possessed of free choice that he might be the author of his own fate, but that God decreed nothing more than to treat him according to his desert. If so weak a scheme as this be received, what will become of God's omnipotence, by which he governs all things according to his secret counsel, independently of every person or thing besides? But whether they wish it or dread it, predestination exhibits itself in Adam's posterity. For the loss of salvation by the whole race through the guilt of one parent, was an event that did not happen by nature. What prevents their acknowledging concerning one man, what they reluctantly grant concerning the whole species? Why should they lose their labour in sophistical evasions? The Scripture proclaims, that all men were, in the person of their father, sentenced to eternal death. This, not being attributable to nature, it is evident must have proceeded from the wonderful counsel of God. The perplexity and hesitation discovered at trifles by these pious defenders of the justice of God, and their facility in overcoming great difficulties, are truly absurd. I inquire again, how it came to pass that the fall of Adam, independent of any remedy, should involve so many nations with their infant children in eternal death, but because such was the will of God. Their tongues, so loquacious on every other point, must here be struck dumb. It is an awful decree, I confess; but no one can deny that God foreknew the future final fate of man before he created him, and that he did foreknow it because it was appointed by his own decree. If any one here attacks God's foreknowledge, he rashly and inconsiderately stumbles. For what ground of accusation is there against the heavenly Judge for not being ignorant of futurity? If there is any just or plausible complaint, it lies against predestination. Nor should it be thought absurd to affirm, that God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and the ruin of his posterity in him, but also arranged all by the determination of his own will. For as it belongs to his wisdom to foreknow every thing future, so it belongs to his power to rule and govern all things by his hand. And this question also, as well as others, is judiciously discussed by Augustine. "We most wholesomely confess what we most rightly believe, that the God and Lord of all things,

who created every thing very good, and foreknew that evil would arise out of good, and knew that it was more suitable to his Almighty goodness to bring good out of evil than not to suffer evil to exist, ordained the life of angels and men in such a manner as to exhibit in it, first, what free-will was capable of doing, and afterwards, what could be effected by the blessings of his grace, and the sentence of his justice."

VIII. Here they recur to the distinction between will and permission, and insist that God permits the destruction of the impious, but does not will it. But what reason shall we assign for his permitting it, but because it is his will? It is not probable, however, that man procured his own destruction by the mere permission, and without any appointment, of God. As though God had not determined what he would choose to be the condition of the principal of his creatures. I shall not hesitate, therefore, to confess plainly with Augustine, "that the will of God is the necessity of things, and that what he has willed will necessarily come to pass; as those things are really about to happen which he has foreseen." Now, if either Pelagians, or Manichæans, or Anabaptists, or Epicureans (for we are concerned with these four sects on this argument), in excuse for themselves and the impious, plead the necessity with which they are bound by God's predestination; they allege nothing applicable to the case. For if predestination is no other than a dispensation of Divine justice; ^{or} ^{capit} mysterious indeed, but liable to no blame; since it is certain they were not unworthy of being predestinated to that fate, it is equally certain, that the destruction they incur by predestination is consistent with the strictest justice. Besides, their perdition depends on the Divine predestination in such a manner, that the cause and matter of it are found in themselves. For the first man fell because the Lord had determined it should so happen. The reason of this determination is unknown to us. Yet it is certain that he determined thus, only because he foresaw it would tend to the just illustration of the glory of his name. Whenever you hear the glory of God mentioned, think of his justice. For what deserves praise must be just. Man falls, therefore, according to the appointment of Divine Providence; but he falls by his own fault. The Lord had a little before pronounced "every

thing that he had made" to be "very good." Whence then comes the depravity of man to revolt from his God? Lest it should be thought to come from creation, God had approved and commended what had proceeded from himself. By his own wickedness, therefore, he corrupted the nature he had received pure from the Lord, and by his fall he drew all his posterity with him into destruction. Wherefore let us rather contemplate the evident cause of condemnation, which is nearer to us in the corrupt nature of mankind, than search after a hidden and altogether incomprehensible one in the predestination of God. And we should feel no reluctance to submit our understanding to the infinite wisdom of God, so far as to acquiesce in its many mysteries. There is a learned ignorance of things which it is neither permitted nor lawful to know, and avidity of knowledge is a species of madness.

IX. Some one perhaps will say, that I have not yet adduced a sufficient answer to that sacrilegious excuse. I confess it is impossible ever wholly to prevent the petulance and murmurs of impiety, yet I think I have said what should suffice to remove not only all just ground, but every plausible pretext for objection. The reprobate wish to be thought excusable in sinning, because they cannot avoid a necessity of sinning; especially since this necessity is laid upon them by the ordination of God. But we deny this to be a just excuse; because the ordination of God, by which they complain that they are destined to destruction, is guided by equity, unknown indeed to us, but indubitably certain. Whence we conclude, that they sustain no misery that is not inflicted upon them by the most righteous judgment of God. In the next place, we maintain that they act preposterously, who, in seeking for the origin of their condemnation, direct their views to the secret recesses of the Divine counsel, and overlook the corruption of nature, which is its real source. The testimony God gives to his creation prevents their imputing it to him. For though, by the eternal providence of God, man was created to that misery to which he is subject, yet the ground of it he has derived from himself, not from God; since he is thus ruined, solely in consequence of his having degenerated from the pure creation of God to vicious and impure depravity.

X. The doctrine of God's predestination is calumniated by its adversaries, as involving a third absurdity. For when we attribute it solely to the determination of the Divine will, that those whom God admits to be heirs of his kingdom are exempted from the universal destruction, from this they infer, that he is a respecter of persons, which the Scripture uniformly denies; that, therefore, either the Scripture is inconsistent with itself, or in the election of God regard is had to merits. In the first place, the Scripture denies that God is a respecter of persons, in a different sense from that in which they understand it: for by the word *person*, it signifies not a man, but those things in a man, which being conspicuous to the eyes, usually conciliate favour, honour, and dignity, or attract hatred, contempt, and disgrace. Such are riches, wealth, power, nobility, magistracy, country, elegance of form, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, poverty, necessity, ignoble birth, slovenliness, contempt, and the like. Thus Peter and Paul declare that God is not a respecter of persons, because he makes no difference between the Jew and Greek, to reject one and receive the other, merely on account of his nation. (*f*) So James uses the same language when he means to assert, that God in his judgment pays no regard to riches. (*g*) And Paul, in another place, declares, that in judging, God has no respect to liberty or bondage. (*h*) There will, therefore, be no contradiction in our affirming, that according to the good pleasure of his will, God chooses whom he will as his children, irrespective of all merit, while he rejects and reprobates others. Yet, for the sake of farther satisfaction, the matter may be explained in the following manner. They ask how it happens, that of two persons distinguished from each other by no merit, God, in his election, leaves one and takes another. I, on the other hand, ask them, whether they suppose him that is taken to possess any thing that can attract the favour of God. If they confess that he has not, as indeed they must, it will follow, that God looks not at man, but derives his motive to favour him from his own goodness. God's election of one man, therefore, while he rejects another, proceeds not from any respect of man, but solely from his own mercy; which

(*f*) Acts x. 34. Rom. ii. 11. Gal. iii. 28.(*g*) James ii. 5.(*h*) Col. iii. 25. Eph. vi. 9.

may freely display and exert itself wherever and whenever it pleases. For we have elsewhere seen also that from the beginning, not many noble, or wise, or honourable were called, (i) that God might humble the pride of flesh; so far is his favour from being confined to persons.

XI. Wherefore some people falsely and wickedly charge God with a violation of equal justice, because, in his predestination, he observes not the same uniform course of proceeding towards all. If he finds all guilty, they say, let him punish all alike; if innocent, let him withhold the rigour of justice from all. But they deal with him just as if either mercy were forbidden him, or, when he chooses to shew mercy, he were constrained wholly to renounce justice. What is it that they require? If all are guilty, that they shall all suffer the same punishment. We confess the guilt to be common, but we say, that some are relieved by Divine mercy. They say, let it relieve all. But we reply, Justice requires that he should likewise shew himself to be a just judge in the infliction of punishment. When they object to this, what is it but attempting to deprive God of the opportunity to manifest his mercy, or to grant it to him, at least, on the condition that he wholly abandon his justice. Wherefore there is the greatest propriety in these observations of Augustine: "The whole mass of mankind having fallen into condemnation in the first man, the vessels that are formed from it to honour, are not vessels of personal righteousness, but of Divine mercy; and the formation of others to dishonour, is to be attributed, not to iniquity, but to the Divine decree," &c. While God rewards those whom he rejects with deserved punishment, and to those whom he calls, freely gives undeserved grace, he is liable to no accusation, but may be compared to a creditor, who has power to release one, and enforce his demands on another. The Lord, therefore, may give grace to whom he will, because he is merciful, and yet not give it to all because he is a just judge; may manifest his free grace, by giving to some what they never deserve, while, by not giving to all, he declares the demerit of all. For when Paul says, that "God hath concluded all under sin, that he might have mercy upon all," (l) it must,

(i) 1 Cor. i. 26.

(l) Gal. iii. 22. Rom. xi. 32.

Opposition of God's mercy to his justice.

at the same time, be added, that he is debtor to none; for no man "hath first given to him," to entitle him to demand a recompence. (m)

XII. Another argument often urged to overthrow predestination is, that its establishment would destroy all solicitude and exertion for rectitude of conduct. For who can hear, they say, that either life or death is appointed for him by God's eternal and immutable decree, without immediately concluding that it is of no importance how he conducts himself; since no action of his can in any respect either impede or promote the predestination of God? Thus all will abandon themselves to despair, and run into every excess to which their licentious propensities may lead them. And truly this objection is not altogether destitute of truth; for there are many swine who bespatter the doctrine of predestination with these impure blasphemies, and with this pretext elude all admonitions and reproofs: God knows what he has determined to do with us: if he has decreed our salvation, he will bring us to it in his own time; if he has destined us to death, it will be in vain for us to strive against it. But the Scripture, while it inculcates superior awe and reverence of mind in the consideration of so great a mystery, instructs the faithful in a very different conclusion, and fully refutes the wicked and unreasonable inferences of these persons. For the design of what it contains respecting predestination is, not that being excited to presumption we may attempt with nefarious temerity to scrutinize the inaccessible secrets of God, but rather that, being humbled and dejected, we may learn to tremble at his justice and admire his mercy. At this object the faithful will aim. But the impure cavils of the wicked are justly restrained by Paul. They profess to go on securely in their vices; because if they are of the number of the elect, such conduct will not prevent their being finally brought into life. But Paul declares the end of our election to be, that we may lead a holy and blameless life. (n) If the object of election be holiness of life, it should rather awaken and stimulate us to a cheerful practice of it, than be used as a pretext for slothfulness. But how inconsistent is it to cease from the practice of virtue

(m) Rom. xi. 35.

(n) Ephes. i. 4.

because election is sufficient to salvation, while the end proposed in election is our diligent performance of virtuous actions? Away then with such corrupt and sacrilegious perversions of the whole order of election. They carry their blasphemies much farther, by asserting, that any one who is reprobated by God will labour to no purpose if he endeavour to approve himself to him by innocence and integrity of life; but here they are convicted of a most impudent falsehood. For whence could such exertion originate but from election? Whoever are of the number of the reprobate, being vessels made to dishonour, cease not to provoke the Divine wrath against them by continual transgressions, and to confirm by evident proofs the judgment of God already denounced against them: so that their striving with him in vain is what can never happen.

XIII. This doctrine is maliciously and impudently calumniated by others, as subversive of all exhortations to piety of life. This formerly brought great odium upon Augustine, which he removed by his Treatise on Correction and Grace, addressed to Valentine, the perusal of which will easily satisfy all pious and teachable persons. Yet I will touch on a few things, which I hope will convince such as are honest and not contentious. How openly and loudly gratuitous election was preached by Paul, we have already seen; was he therefore cold in admonitions and exhortations? Let these good zealots compare his vehemence with theirs; theirs will be found ice itself in comparison with his incredible fervour. And certainly every scruple is removed by this principle, that "God hath not called us to uncleanness, but that every one should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;" (o) and again, that "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." (p) Indeed, a slight acquaintance with Paul will enable any one to understand, without tedious arguments, how easily he reconciles things which they pretend to be repugnant to each other. Christ commands men to believe in him. Yet his limitation is neither false nor contrary to his command, when he says, "No man can come unto me, except it were given

(o) 1 Thess. iv. 4, 7.

(p) Ephes. ii. 10.

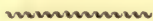
unto him of my Father.” (q) “ Let preaching therefore have its course to bring men to faith, and by a continual progress to promote their perseverance. Nor let the knowledge of predestination be prevented, that the obedient may not be proud as of any thing of their own, but may glory in the Lord. Christ had some particular meaning in saying, ‘ Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.’ (r) Therefore when we exhort and preach, persons endued with ears readily obey; and those who are destitute of them exhibit an accomplishment of the Scripture, that hearing they hear not. (s) “ But why (says Augustine) should some have ears and others not? ‘ Who hath known the mind of the Lord?’ (t) Must that which is evident be denied, because that which is concealed cannot be comprehended?” These observations I have faithfully borrowed from Augustine, but as his words will perhaps have more authority than mine, I will proceed to an exact quotation of them. “ If on hearing this, some persons became torpid and slothful, and exchanging labour for lawless desire pursue the various objects of concupiscence, must what is declared concerning the foreknowledge of God be therefore accounted false? If God foreknew that they would be good, will they not be so, in whatever wickedness they now live; and if he foreknew that they would be wicked, will they not be so, in whatever goodness they now appear? Are these, then, sufficient causes why the truths which are declared concerning the foreknowledge of God should be either denied or passed over in silence? especially when the consequence of silence respecting these would be the adoption of other errors. The reason of concealing the truth (he says) is one thing, and the necessity of declaring it is another. It would be tedious to inquire after all the reasons for passing the truth over in silence; but this is one of them: lest those who understand it not should become worse, while we wish to make those who understand it better informed; who indeed are not made wiser by our declaring any such thing, nor are they rendered worse. But since the truth is of such a nature, that when we speak of it he becomes worse who cannot understand it, and when we are silent about it, he who can understand it becomes worse: what do we

(q) John vi. 65. (r) Matt. xiii. 9. (s) Isaiah vi. 9. (t) Rom. xi. 34.

think ought to be done? Should not the truth rather be spoken, that he who is capable may understand it, than buried in silence; the consequence of which would be, not only that neither would know it, but even the more intelligent of the two would become worse, who, if he heard and understood it, would also teach it to many others. And we are unwilling to say, what we are authorised to say by the testimony of Scripture. For we are afraid, indeed, lest by speaking we may offend him who cannot understand, but are not afraid lest in consequence of our silence he who is capable of understanding the truth may be deceived by falsehood." And condensing this sentiment afterwards into a smaller compass, he places it in a still stronger light. "Wherefore if the apostles and the succeeding teachers of the Church both piously treated of God's eternal election, and held the faithful under the discipline of a pious life, what reason have these our opponents, when silenced by the invincible force of truth, to suppose themselves right in maintaining that what is spoken of predestination, although it be true, ought not to be preached to the people? But it must by all means be preached, that he who hath ears to hear may hear. But who has them, unless he receives them from him who hath promised to bestow them? Certainly he who receives not may reject, provided he who receives, takes and drinks, drinks and lives. For as piety must be preached that God may be rightly worshipped, so also must predestination, that he who hath ears to hear of the grace of God, may glory in God, and not in himself."

XIV. And yet, being peculiarly desirous of edification, that holy man regulates his mode of teaching the truth, so that offence may as far as possible be prudently avoided. For he suggests that whatever is asserted with truth may also be delivered in a suitable manner. If any one address the people in such a way as this, If you believe not, it is because you are by a Divine decree already destined to destruction; he not only cherishes slothfulness, but even encourages wickedness. If any one extend the declaration to the future, that they who hear will never believe because they are reprobated; this would be rather imprecation than instruction. Such persons, therefore, as foolish teachers, or inauspicious ominous prophets, Augustine charges to depart from the Church. In another place, indeed,

he justly maintains, "that a man then profits by correction when he, who causes whom he pleases to profit without correction, compassionates and assists. But why some in one way, and some in another? Far be it from us to ascribe the choice to the clay instead of the potter." Again afterwards, "When men are either introduced or restored into the way of righteousness by correction, who works salvation in their hearts, but he who giveth the increase, whoever plants and waters? he whose determination to save is not resisted by any free-will of man? It is beyond all doubt therefore that the will of God, who hath done whatever he hath pleased in heaven and in earth, and who hath done even things that are yet future, cannot possibly be resisted by the will of man, so as to prevent the execution of his purposes; since he controls the wills of men according to his pleasure." Again, "When he designs to bring men to himself, does he bind them by corporeal bonds? He acts inwardly, he inwardly seizes their hearts, he inwardly moves their hearts, and draws them by their wills, which he has wrought in them." But he immediately subjoins, what must by no means be omitted; "that because we know not who belongs, or does not belong to the number of the predestinated, it becomes us affectionately to desire the salvation of all. The consequence will be, that whomsoever we meet we shall endeavour to make him a partaker of peace. But our peace shall rest upon the sons of peace. On our part, therefore, salutary and severe reproof, like a medicine, must be administered to all that they may neither perish themselves nor destroy others; but it will be the province of God to render it useful to them whom he had foreknown and predestinated."



CHAPTER XXIV.

Election confirmed by the Divine Call. The destined Destruction of the Reprobate procured by themselves.

BUT, in order to a further elucidation of the subject, it is necessary to treat of the calling of the elect, and of the blinding and hardening of the impious. On the former I have already

made a few observations, with a view to refute the error of those who suppose the generality of the promises to belong equally to all mankind. But the discriminating election of God, which is otherwise concealed within himself, he manifests only by his calling, which may therefore with propriety be termed the testification or evidence of it. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified," in order to their essential glorification. (u) Though by choosing his people, the Lord hath adopted them as his children, yet we see that they enter not on the possession of so great a blessing till they are called; on the other hand, as soon as they are called, they immediately enjoy some communication of his election. On this account Paul calls the Spirit received by them both "the Spirit of adoption, and the seal and earnest of the future inheritance;" (x) because, by his testimony, he confirms and seals to their hearts the certainty of their future adoption. For though the preaching of the gospel is a stream from the source of election, yet, being common also to the reprobate, it would of itself be no solid proof of it. For God effectually teaches his elect, to bring them to faith, as we have already cited from the words of Christ; "He which is of God, he" and he alone "hath seen the Father." (y) Again, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me." (z) For he says in another place, "No man can come to me, except the Father draw him." (a) This passage is judiciously explained by Augustine in the following words: "If, according to the declaration of truth, every one that hath learned cometh; whosoever cometh not, certainly hath not learned. It does not necessarily follow that he who can come actually comes, unless he has both willed and done it; but every one that hath learned of the Father, not only can come, but also actually comes; where there is an immediate union of the advantage of possibility, the inclination of the will, and the consequent action." In another place he is still clearer: "Every one that hath heard and learned of

(u) Rom. viii. 29, 30.

(x) Rom. viii. 15, 16. Ephes. i. 13, 14.

(y) John vi. 46.

(z) John xvii. 6.

(a) John vi. 44.

the Father, cometh unto me. Is not this saying, There is no one that heareth and learneth of the Father, and cometh not unto me? For if every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh, certainly every one that cometh not hath neither heard nor learned of the Father: for if he had heard and learned, he would come. Very remote from carnal observation is this school, in which men hear and learn of the Father to come to the Son." Just after he says; "This grace, which is secretly communicated to the hearts of men, is received by no hard heart; for the first object of its communication is, that hardness of heart may be taken away. When the Father is heard within therefore, he taketh away the heart of stone and giveth a heart of flesh. For thus he forms children of promise and vessels of mercy whom he hath prepared for glory. Why then does he not teach all, that they may come to Christ, but because all whom he teaches, he teaches in mercy? but whom he teaches not, he teaches not in judgment: for he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." Those whom God hath chosen, therefore, he designates as his children, and determines himself to be their Father. By calling, he introduces them into his family, and unites them to himself, that they may be one. By connecting calling with election, the Scripture evidently suggests, that nothing is requisite to it but the free mercy of God. For if we inquire whom he calls, and for what reason, the answer is, those whom he had elected. But when we come to election, we see nothing but mercy on every side. And so that observation of Paul is very applicable here, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;" but not as it is commonly understood by those who make a distribution between the grace of God, and the will and exertion of man. For they say, that human desires and endeavours have no efficacy of themselves, unless they are rendered successful by the grace of God; but maintain that, with the assistance of his blessing, these things have also their share in procuring salvation. To refute their cavil, I prefer Augustine's words to my own. "If the apostle only meant that it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, without the assistance of the merciful Lord; we may retort the converse proposition, that it is not of mercy

alone, without the assistance of willing and running." If this be manifestly impious, we may be certain that the apostle ascribes every thing to the Lord's mercy, and leaves nothing to our wills or exertions. This was the opinion of that holy man. Nor is the least regard due to their paltry sophism, that Paul would not have expressed himself so, if we had no exertion or will. For he considered not what was in man; but seeing some persons attribute salvation partly to human industry, he simply condemned their error in the former part of the sentence, and in the latter, vindicated the claim of Divine mercy to the whole accomplishment of salvation. And what do the prophets, but perpetually proclaim the gratuitous calling of God?

II. This point is farther demonstrated by the very nature and dispensation of calling, which consists not in the mere preaching of the word, but in the accompanying illumination of the Spirit. To whom God offers his word, we are informed in the prophet; "I am sought of them that asked not for me: I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." (b) And lest the Jews should suppose that this clemency extended only to the Gentiles, he recalls to their remembrance the situation from which he took their Father Abraham, when he deigned to draw him to himself; that was from the midst of idolatry, in which he and all his family were sunk. (c) When he first shines upon the undeserving with the light of his word, he thereby exhibits a most brilliant specimen of his free goodness. Here then the infinite goodness of God is displayed, but not to the salvation of all; for heavier judgment awaits the reprobate, because they reject the testimony of Divine love. And God also, to to manifest his glory, withdraws from them the efficacious influence of his Spirit. This internal call therefore is a pledge of salvation, which cannot possibly deceive. To this purpose is that passage of John, "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." (d) And lest the flesh should glory in having answered at least to his call, and accepted his free offers, he affirms that men have no ears to hear,

• (b) Isaiah lxx. 1.

(c) Joshua xxiv. 2, 3.

(d) 1 John iii. 24.

or eyes to see, but such as he has formed; and that he acts in this, not according to individual gratitude, but according to his own election. Of this fact Luke gives us an eminent example, where Jews and Gentiles in common heard the preaching of Paul and Barnabas. Though they were all instructed on that occasion with the same discourse, it is narrated that "as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." (e) With what face then can we deny the freeness of calling, in which election reigns alone, even to the last?

III. Here two errors are to be avoided. For some suppose man to be a co-operator with God, so that the validity of election depends on his consent; thus according to them the will of man is superior to the counsel of God. As though the Scripture taught, that we are only given an ability to believe, and not faith itself. Others, not thus enervating the grace of the Holy Spirit, yet induced by I know not what mode of reasoning, suspend election on that which is subsequent to it; as though it were doubtful and ineffectual till it is confirmed by faith. That this is its confirmation to us, is very clear; that it is the manifestation of God's secret counsel before concealed, we have already seen; but all that we are to understand by this, is that what was before unknown is verified, and as it were ratified with a seal. But it is contrary to the truth to assert, that election has no efficacy till after we have embraced the gospel, and that this circumstance gives it all its energy. The certainty of it, indeed, we are to seek here; for if we attempt to penetrate to the eternal decree of God, we shall be ingulfed in the profound abyss. But when God has discovered it to us, we must ascend to loftier heights, that the cause may not be lost in the effect. For what can be more absurd and inconsistent, when the Scripture teaches that we are illuminated according as God has chosen us, than our eyes being so dazzled with the blaze of this light as to refuse to contemplate election? At the same time I admit that, in order to attain an assurance of our salvation, we ought to begin with the word, and that with it our confidence ought to be satisfied, so as to call upon God as our Father. For some persons, to obtain certainty respecting the counsel of God, "which is nigh unto us, in our mouth and in our heart," (f) pre-

(e) Acts xiii. 48.

(f) Deut. xxx. 14.

posterously wish to soar above the clouds. Such temerity, therefore, should be restrained by the sobriety of faith, that we may be satisfied with the testimony of God in his external word respecting his secret grace; only the channel, which conveys to us such a copious stream to satisfy our thirst, must not deprive the fountain-head of the honour which belongs to it.

IV. As it is erroneous, therefore, to suspend the efficacy of election upon the faith of the gospel, by which we discover our interest in election; so we shall observe the best order, if, in seeking an assurance of our election, we confine our attention to those subsequent signs which are certain attestations of it. Satan never attacks the faithful with a more grievous or dangerous temptation, than when he disquiets them with doubts of their election, and stimulates to an improper desire of seeking it in a wrong way. I call it seeking in a wrong way, when miserable man endeavours to force his way into the secret recesses of Divine wisdom, and to penetrate even to the highest eternity, that he may discover what is determined concerning him at the tribunal of God, Then he precipitates himself to be absorbed in the profound of an unfathomable gulf; then he entangles himself in numberless and inextricable snares; then he sinks himself in an abyss of total darkness. For it is right that the folly of the human mind should be thus punished with horrible destruction, when it attempts by its own ability to rise to the summit of Divine wisdom. This temptation is the more fatal, because there is no other to which men in general have a stronger propensity. For there is scarcely a person to be found, whose mind is not sometimes struck with this thought, Whence can you obtain salvation but from the election of God? And what revelation have you received of election? If this has once impressed a man, it either perpetually excruciates the unhappy being with dreadful torments, or altogether stupefies him with astonishment. Indeed, I should desire no stronger argument to prove how extremely erroneous the conceptions of such persons are respecting predestination, than experience itself; since no error can affect the mind, more pestilent than such as disturbs the conscience, and destroys its peace and tranquillity towards God, Therefore, if we dread shipwreck, let us anxiously beware of this rock, on which none ever strike without being de-

stroyed. But though the discussion of predestination may be compared to a dangerous ocean; yet in traversing over it the navigation is safe and serene, and I will also add pleasant, unless any one freely wishes to expose himself to danger. For as those who, in order to gain an assurance of their election, examine into the eternal counsel of God without the word, plunge themselves into a fatal abyss, so they who investigate it in a regular and orderly manner, as it is contained in the word, derive from such inquiry the benefit of peculiar consolation. Let this then be our way of inquiry; to begin and end with the calling of God. Though this prevents not the faithful from perceiving, that the blessings they daily receive from the hand of God descends from that secret adoption; as Isaiah introduces them, saying, "Thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth:" (*g*) for by adoption as by a token, God chooses to confirm to us all that we are permitted to know of his counsel. Lest this should be thought a weak testimony, let us consider how much clearness and certainty it affords us. Bernard has some pertinent observations on this subject. After speaking of the reprobate, he says, "The counsel of God stands, the sentence of God stands, respecting them who fear him, concealing their faults and rewarding their virtues; so that to them, not only good things, but evil ones also co-operate for good. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is sufficient for me, for all righteousness, to possess his favour alone, against whom alone I have sinned. All that he has decreed not to impute to me, is just as if it had never been." And a little after, "O place of true rest, which I might not improperly call a bed-chamber, in which God is viewed, not as disturbed with anger, or filled with care, but where his will is proved to be good, and acceptable, and perfect. This view is not terrifying, but soothing; it excites no restless curiosity, but allays it; it fatigues not the senses, but tranquillises them. Here true rest is enjoyed. The tranquil God tranquillises all things; and to behold him at rest, is to enjoy repose."

V. In the first place, if we seek the fatherly clemency and

(*g*) Isaiah xxv. 1.

propitious heart of God, our eyes must be directed to Christ, in whom alone the Father is well pleased. (h) If we seek salvation, life, and the immortality of the heavenly kingdom, recourse must be had to no other; for he alone is the Fountain of life, the Anchor of salvation, and the Heir of the kingdom of heaven. Now what is the end of election, but that being adopted as children by our heavenly Father, we may by his favour obtain salvation and immortality? Consider and investigate it as much as you please, you will not find its ultimate scope extend beyond this. The persons, therefore, whom God hath adopted as his children, he is said to have chosen, not in themselves, but in Christ; because it was impossible for him to love them, except in him; or to honour them with the inheritance of his kingdom, unless previously made partakers of him. But if we are chosen in him, we shall find no assurance of our election in ourselves; nor even in God the Father, considered alone, abstractedly from the Son. Christ therefore is the mirror, in which it behoves us to contemplate our election, and here we may do it with safety. For as the Father hath determined to unite to the body of his Son, all who are the objects of his eternal choice, that he may have, as his children, all that he recognises among his members, we have a testimony sufficiently clear and strong, that if we have communion with Christ, we are written in the book of life. And he gave us this certain communion with himself, when he testified by the preaching of the gospel, that he was given to us by the Father, to be ours with all his benefits. We are said to put him on, and to grow up into him, that we may live because he lives. This doctrine is often repeated. "God spared not his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." (i) "He that believeth on him, is passed from death unto life." (k) In which sense he calls himself "The bread of life, he that eateth which, shall live for ever." (l) He, I say, is our witness, that all who receive him by faith shall be considered as the children of his heavenly Father. If we desire any thing more than being numbered among the sons and heirs of God, we must rise above Christ. If this is our highest limit, what folly do we betray in

(h) Matt. iii. 17.

(i) Rom. viii. 32. John iii. 15, 16.

(k) John v. 24.

(l) John vi. 35—58.

seeking out of him, that which we have already obtained in him, and which can never be found any where else? Besides, as he is the Father's eternal Wisdom, immutable Truth, and determined Counsel, we have no reason to fear the least variation in the declarations of his word from that will of the Father, which is the object of our inquiry; indeed, he faithfully reveals it to us, as it has been from the beginning, and will ever continue to be. This doctrine ought to have a practical influence on our prayers. For though faith in election animates us to call upon God, yet it would be preposterous to obtrude it upon him when we pray, or to stipulate this condition—O Lord, if I am elected, hear me; since it is his pleasure that we should be satisfied with his promises, and make no farther inquiries whether he will be propitious to our prayers. This prudence will extricate us from many snares, if we know how to make a right use of what has been rightly written; but we must not inconsiderately apply to various purposes, what ought to be restricted to the object particularly designed.

VI. For the establishment of our confidence, there is also another confirmation of election, which we have said is connected with our calling. For those whom Christ illuminates with the knowledge of his name, and introduces into the bosom of his Church, he is said to receive into his charge and protection. And all whom he receives are said to be committed, and intrusted to him by the Father, to be kept to eternal life. What do we wish for ourselves? Christ loudly proclaims that all whose salvation was designed by the Father, had been delivered by him into his protection. (*m*) If therefore we want to ascertain whether God is concerned for our salvation, let us inquire whether he hath committed us to Christ, whom he constituted the only Saviour of all his people. Now if we doubt whether Christ has received us into his charge and custody, he obviates this doubt, by freely offering himself as our Shepherd, and declaring that if we hear his voice, we shall be numbered among his sheep. We therefore embrace Christ, thus kindly offered to us and advancing to meet us; and he will number us with his sheep, and preserve us enclosed in his fold. But yet we feel anxiety for our future

state; for as Paul declares that "whom he predestinated, them he also called;" (*n*) so Christ informs us, that "many are called, but few chosen." (*o*) Besides, Paul himself also in another place cautions against carelessness, saying, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." (*p*) Again, "Art thou grafted among the people of God? Be not high-minded, but fear. God is able to cut thee off again, and graft in others." (*q*) Lastly, experience itself teaches us that vocation and faith are of little value, unless accompanied by perseverance, which is not the lot of all. But Christ has delivered us from this anxiety, for these promises undoubtedly belong to the future: "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." (*r*) Again, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (*s*) Besides, when he declares, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up," (*t*) he fully implies, on the contrary, that those who are rooted in God, can never by any violence be deprived of salvation. With this corresponds that passage of John, "If they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." (*u*) Hence also that magnificent exultation of Paul, in defiance of life and death, of things present and future; which must necessarily have been founded in the gift of perseverance. (*x*) Nor can it be doubted that he applies this sentiment to all the elect. The same apostle in another place says, "He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (*y*) This also supported David when his faith was failing: "Thou wilt not forsake the work of thine own hands." (*z*) Nor is it to be doubted, that when Christ intercedes for all the elect, he prays

(*n*) Rom. viii. 30.(*q*) Rom. xi. 17—23.(*r*) Matt. xv. 13.(*y*) Phil. i. 6.(*o*) Matt. xxii. 14.(*r*) John vi. 37, 39.(*u*) 1 John ii. 19.(*t*) Psalm cxxviii. 8.(*p*) 1 Cor. x. 12.(*s*) John x. 27—29.(*x*) Rom. viii. 35—39.

for them the same as for Peter, that their faith may never fail. Hence we conclude, that they are beyond all danger of falling away, because the intercessions of the Son of God for their perseverance in piety have not been rejected. What did Christ intend we should learn from this, but confidence in our perpetual security, since we have once been introduced into the number of his people.

VII. But it daily happens, that they who appeared to belong to Christ, fall away from him again, and sink into ruin. Even in that very place, where he asserts that none perish of those who were given to him by the Father, he excepts the son of perdition. This is true; but it is equally certain, that such persons never adhered to Christ with that confidence of heart which, we say, gives us an assurance of our election. "They went out from us," says John, "but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." (a) I dispute not their having similar signs of calling with the elect; but I am far from admitting them to possess that certain assurance of election which I enjoin the faithful to seek from the word of the gospel. Wherefore, let not such examples moves us from a tranquil reliance on our Lord's promise, where he declares, that all who receive him by faith were given him by the Father, and that since he is their Guardian and Shepherd, not one of them shall perish. Of Judas we shall speak afterwards. Paul is dissuading Christians, not from all security, but from supine, unguarded, carnal security, which is attended with pride, arrogance, and contempt of others, extinguishes humility and reverence of God, and produces forgetfulness of favours received. For he is addressing Gentiles, teaching them that the Jews should not be proudly and inhumanly insulted because they had been rejected, and the Gentiles substituted in their place. He also inculcates fear; not such a fear as produces terror and uncertainty, but such as teaches humble admiration of the grace of God, without any diminution of confidence in it; as has been elsewhere observed. Besides, he is not addressing individuals, but distinct parties generally. For as the Church was divided into two parties, and

(a) 1 John ii. 19.

emulation gave birth to dissension, Paul admonishes the Gentiles, that their substitution in the place of the holy and peculiar people ought to be a motive to fear and modesty. There were, however, many clamorous people among them, whose empty boasting it was necessary to restrain. But we have already seen, that our hope extends into futurity, even beyond the grave, and that nothing is more contrary to its nature than doubts respecting our final destiny.

VIII. The declaration of Christ, that “many are called, and few chosen,” is very improperly understood. For there will be no ambiguity in it, if we remember, what must be clear from the foregoing observations, that there are two kinds of calling. For there is an universal call, by which God, in the external preaching of the word, invites all indiscriminately to come to him, even those to whom he intends it as a savour of death, and an occasion of heavier condemnation. There is also a special call, with which he, for the most part, favours only the faithful, when, by the inward illumination of his Spirit, he causes the word preached to sink into their hearts. Yet sometimes he also communicates it to those whom he only enlightens for a season, and afterwards forsakes on account of their ingratitude, and strikes with greater blindness. Now the Lord seeing the gospel, published far and wide, held in contempt by the generality of men, and justly appreciated by few, gives us a description of God, under the character of a king, who prepares a solemn feast, and sends out his messengers in every direction to invite a great company, but can only prevail on very few, every one alleging impediments to excuse himself; so that at length he is constrained by their refusal to bring in all who can be found in the streets. Thus far, every one sees, the parable is to be understood of the external call. He proceeds to inform us, that God acts like a good founder of a feast, walking round the tables, courteously receiving his guests; but that if he finds any one not adorned with a nuptial garment, he suffers not the meanness of such a person to disgrace the festivity of the banquet. I confess, this part is to be understood of those who enter into the Church by a profession of faith, but are not invested with the sanctification of Christ. Such blemishes, and as it were cankers of his Church, God will not always suffer, but will cast

them out of it, as their turpitude deserves. Few, therefore, are chosen out of a multitude that are called, but not with that calling by which we say the faithful ought to judge of their election. For the former is common also to the wicked; but the latter is attended with the spirit of regeneration, the earnest and seal of the future inheritance, which seals our hearts to to the day of the Lord. (b) In short, though hypocrites boast of piety as if they were true worshipers of God, Christ declares that he will finally cast them out of the place which they unjustly occupy. Thus the Psalmist says, "Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? He that worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." (c) Again, "This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob." (d) And thus the Spirit exhorts the faithful to patience, that they may not be disturbed by the Ishmaelites being united with them in the Church, since the mask will at length be torn off, and they will be cast out with disgrace.

IX. The same reasoning applies to the exception lately cited, where Christ says, that "none of them is lost, but the son of perdition." (e) Here is, indeed, some inaccuracy of expression, but the meaning is clear. For he was never reckoned among the sheep of Christ, as being really such, but only as he occupied the place of one. When the Lord declares he was chosen by himself with the other apostles, it only refers to the ministerial office. "Have not I chosen you twelve," says he, "and one of you is a devil?" (f) That is, he had chosen him to the office of an apostle. But when he speaks of election to salvation, he excludes him from the number of the elect; "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen." (g) If any one confound the term *election* in these passages, he will miserably embarrass himself; if he make a proper distinction, nothing is plainer. It is therefore a very erroneous and pernicious assertion of Gregory, that we are only conscious of our calling, but uncertain of our election; from which he exhorts all to fear and trembling, using also this argument, that though we know what we are to-day, yet we know not what we may be in future. But the context plainly shews the cause of his error on this point. For as he

(b) Ephes. i. 13, 14.

(c) Psalm xv. 1.

(d) Psalm xxiv. 6.

(e) John xvii. 12.

(f) John vi. 70.

(g) John xiii. 18.

suspended election on the merit of works, this furnished abundant reason for discouragement to the minds of men; he could never establish them, for want of leading them from themselves to a confidence in the Divine goodness. Hence the faithful have some perception of what we stated at the beginning, that predestination, rightly considered, neither destroys nor weakens faith, but rather furnishes its best confirmation. Yet I will not deny, that the Spirit sometimes accommodates his language to the limited extent of our capacity, as when he says; "They shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel." (*h*) As though God were beginning to write in the book of life those whom he numbers among his people, whereas we know from the testimony of Christ, that the names of God's children have been written in the book of life from the beginning. (*i*) But these expressions only signify the rejection of those who seemed to be the chief among the elect; as the Psalmist says, "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not to be written with the righteous." (*k*)

X. Now the elect are not gathered into the fold of Christ by calling, immediately from their birth, nor all at the same time, but according as God is pleased to dispense his grace to them. Before they are gathered to that chief Shepherd, they go astray, scattered in the common wilderness, and differing in no respect from others, except in being protected by the special mercy of God from rushing down the precipice of eternal death. If you observe them therefore, you will see the posterity of Adam, partaking of the common corruption of the whole species. That they go not to the most desperate extremes of impiety, is not owing to any innate goodness of theirs, but because the eye of God watches over them, and his hand is extended for their preservation. For those who dream of I know not what seed of election sown in their hearts from their very birth, always inclining them to piety and the fear of God, are unsupported by the authority of Scripture, and refuted by experience itself. They produce, indeed, a few examples to prove that certain elect persons were not entire strangers to religion, even

(*h*) Ezek. xiii. 9.(*i*) Luke x. 20.(*k*) Psalm lxi. 28.

before they were truly enlightened; that Paul lived blameless in his pharisaism: (*l*) that Cornelius with his alms and prayers was accepted of God, (*m*) and if there are any other similar ones. What they say of Paul, we admit; but respecting Cornelius, we maintain that they are deceived: for it is evident, he was then enlightened and regenerated, and wanted nothing but a clear revelation of the gospel. But what will they extort from these very few examples? that the elect have always been endued with the spirit of piety? This is just as if any one, having proved the integrity of Aristides, Socrates, Xenocrates, Scipio, Curius, Camillus, and other heathens, should conclude from this, that all who were left in the darkness of idolatry, were followers of holiness and virtue. But this is contradicted in many passages of Scripture. Paul's description of the state of the Ephesians prior to regeneration, exhibits not a grain of this seed. "Ye were dead," he says, "in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." (*n*) Again, "Remember that at that time ye were without hope, and without God in the world." (*o*) Again, "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." (*p*) But perhaps they will plead, that these passages refer to that ignorance of the true God, in which they acknowledge the elect to be involved previously to their calling. Though this would be an impudent cavil, since the apostle's inferences from them are such as these: "Put away lying; and let him that stole, steal no more." (*q*) But what will they reply to other passages? Such as that where, after declaring to the Corinthians, that "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God;" he immediately adds, "And

(*l*) Phil. iii. 5, 6.(*m*) Acts x. 2.(*n*) Ephes. ii. 1—3.(*o*) Ephes. ii. 11, 12.(*p*) Ephes. v. 8. iv. 18.(*q*) Ephes. iv. 25, 28.

such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” (r) And another passage, addressed to the Romans; “As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?” (s)

XI. What kind of seed of election was springing up in them, who were all their lives contaminated with various pollutions, and with desperate wickedness wallowed in the most nefarious and execrable of all crimes? If he had intended to speak according to these teachers, he ought to have shewn how much they were obliged to the goodness of God, which had preserved them from falling into such great pollutions. So likewise the persons whom Peter addressed, he ought to have exhorted to gratitude on account of the perpetual seed of election. But, on the contrary, he admonishes them, “that the time past may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles.” (t) What if we come to particular examples? What appearance of righteousness was there in Rahab the harlot before faith? (u) in Manasseh, when Jerusalem was dyed, and almost drowned, with the blood of the prophets? (x) in the thief, who repented in his dying moments? (y) Away then with these arguments, which men of presumptuous curiosity raise to themselves, without regarding the Scripture. Let us rather abide by the declaration of the Scripture, that “all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way,” (z) that is, destruction. Those whom the Lord hath determined to rescue from this gulf of perdition, he defers till his appointed season; before which he only preserves them from falling into unpardonable blasphemy.

XII. As the Lord, by his effectual calling of the elect, completes the salvation to which he predestinated them in his eternal counsel; so he hath his judgments against the reprobate, by which he executes his counsel respecting them. [Those, therefore, whom he hath created to a life of shame and a death of

(r) 1 Cor. xi. 9—11.

(s) Rom. vi. 19, 21.

(t) 1 Peter iv. 3.

(u) Josh. ii. 1, &c.

(x) 2 Kings xxi. 16.

(y) Luke xxiii. 40—42.

(z) Isaiah liii. 6.

destruction, that they might be instruments of his wrath, and examples of his severity, he causes to reach their appointed end, sometimes depriving them of the opportunity of hearing the word, sometimes, by the preaching of it, increasing their blindness and stupidity.] Of the former there are innumerable examples; let us only select one that is more evident and remarkable than the rest. Before the advent of Christ, there passed about four thousand years, in which the Lord concealed the light of the doctrine of salvation from all the Gentiles. If it be replied, that he withheld from them the participation of so great a blessing because he esteemed them unworthy; their posterity will be found equally unworthy of it. The truth of this, to say nothing of experience, is sufficiently attested by Malachi, who follows his reproofs of unbelief and gross blasphemies by an immediate prediction of the coming of the Messiah. Why then is he given to the posterity rather than to their ancestors? He will torment himself in vain, who seeks for any cause of this beyond the secret and inscrutable counsel of God. Nor need we be afraid lest any disciple of Porphyry should be emboldened to calumniate the justice of God by our silence in its defence. For while we assert that all deserve to perish, and it is of God's free goodness that any are saved, enough is said for the illustration of his glory, so that every subterfuge of ours is altogether unnecessary. The supreme Lord, therefore, by depriving of the communication of his light, and leaving in darkness those whom he hath reprobated, makes way for the accomplishment of his predestination. Of the second class, the Scriptures contain many examples, and others present themselves every day. The same sermon is addressed to a hundred persons; twenty receive it with the obedience of faith; the others despise, or ridicule, or reject, or condemn it. If it be replied, that the difference proceeds from their wickedness and perverseness, this will afford no satisfaction; because the minds of others would have been influenced by the same wickedness, but for the correction of Divine goodness. And thus we shall always be perplexed, unless we recur to Paul's question, "Who maketh thee to differ?" (a) In which

(a) 1 Cor. iv. 7.

he signifies, that the excellence of some men beyond others, is not from their own virtue, but solely from Divine grace.

XIII. Why then, in bestowing grace upon some, does he pass over others? Luke assigns a reason for the former, that they "were ordained to eternal life." What conclusion then shall we draw respecting the latter, but that they are vessels of wrath to dishonour? Wherefore let us not hesitate to say with Augustine; "God could convert to good the will of the wicked, because he is omnipotent. It is evident that he could. Why then does he not? Because he would not. Why he would not, remains with himself." For we ought not to aim at more wisdom than becomes us. That will be much better than adopting the evasion of Chrysostom, "that he draws those who are willing, and who stretch out their hands for his aid;" that the difference may not appear to consist in the decree of God, but wholly in the will of man. But an approach to him is so far from being a mere effort of man, that even pious persons, and such as fear God, still stand in need of the peculiar impulse of the Spirit. Lydia, the seller of purple, feared God, and yet it was necessary that her heart should be opened, to attend to, and profit by, the doctrine of Paul. This declaration is not made respecting a single female, but in order to teach us that every one's advancement in piety is the secret work of the Spirit. It is a fact not to be doubted, that God sends his word to many whose blindness he determines shall be increased. For with what design does he direct so many commands to be delivered to Pharaoh? Was it from an expectation that his heart would be softened by repeated and frequent messages? Before he began, he knew and foretold the result. He commanded Moses to go and declare his will to Pharaoh, adding at the same time, "But I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go." (b) So when he calls forth Ezekiel, he apprises him that he is sending him to a rebellious and obstinate people, that he may not be alarmed if they refuse to hear him. (c) So Jeremiah foretels that his word will be like fire, to scatter and destroy the people like stubble. (d) But the prophecy of Isaiah furnishes a still stronger confirmation; for this is his mission

(b) Exod. iv. 21.

(c) Ezek. ii. 3. xii. 2.

(d) Jer. v. 14.

from the Lord; "Go and tell this people, Hear ye, indeed, but understand not, and see ye, indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." (*e*) Observe he directs his voice to them, but it is that they may become more deaf; he kindles a light, but it is that they may be made more blind; he publishes his doctrine, but it is that they may be more besotted; he applies a remedy, but it is that they may not be healed. John, citing this prophecy, declares that the Jews could not believe, because this curse of God was upon them. (*f*) Nor can it be disputed, that to such persons as God determines not to enlighten, he delivers his doctrine involved in enigmatical obscurity, that its only effect may be to increase their stupidity. For Christ testifies that he confined to his disciples the explanations of the parables in which he had addressed the multitude; "because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." (*g*) What does the Lord mean, you will say, by teaching those by whom he takes care not to be understood? Consider whence the fault arises, and you will cease the inquiry: for whatever obscurity there is in the word, yet there is always light enough to convince the consciences of the wicked.

XIV. It remains now to be seen why the Lord does that which it is evident he does. If it be replied, that this is done because men have deserved it by impiety, wickedness, and ingratitude; it will be a just and true observation; but as we have not yet discovered the reason of this diversity, why some persist in obduracy while others are inclined to obedience, the discussion of it will necessarily lead us to the same remark that Paul has quoted from Moses concerning Pharaoh; "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." (*h*) That the reprobate obey not the word of God, when made known to them, is justly imputed to the wickedness and depravity of their hearts, provided it be

(*e*) Isaiah vi. 9, 10.(*g*) Matt. xiii. 11.(*f*) John xii. 39, 40.(*h*) Rom. ix. 17.

at the same time stated, that they are abandoned to this depravity, because they have been raised up by a just but inscrutable judgment of God to display his glory in their condemnation. So, when it is related of the sons of Eli, that they listened not to his salutary admonitions, "because the Lord would slay them;" (i) it is not denied that their obstinacy proceeded from their own wickedness, but it is plainly implied, that though the Lord was able to soften their hearts, yet they were left in their obstinacy, because his immutable decree had predestinated them to destruction. To the same purpose is that passage of John; "Though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, "Lord, who hath believed our report?" (k) For though he does not acquit the obstinate from the charge of guilt, yet he satisfies himself with this reason, that the grace of God has no charms for men till the Holy Spirit gives them a taste for it. And Christ cites the prophecy of Isaiah, "They shall be all taught of God," (l) with no other design than to shew, that the Jews are reprobate and strangers to the Church, because they are destitute of docility; and he adduces no other reason for it than that the promise of God does not belong to them: which is confirmed by that passage of Paul, where "Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness," is said to be "unto them which are called, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (m) For, after remarking what generally happens whenever the gospel is preached, that it exasperates some, and is despised by others, he represents it as duly appreciated only by "those who are called." A little before he had mentioned "them that believe;" not that he had an intention to deny its proper place to the grace of God, which precedes faith, but he seems to add this second description by way of correction, in order that those who had received the gospel might ascribe the praise of their faith to the Divine call. And so likewise, in a subsequent sentence, he represents them as the objects of Divine election. When the impious hear these

(i) 1 Sam. ii. 25.

(l) John vi. 45.

(k) John xii. 37, 38.

(m) 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

things, they loudly complain that God, by a wanton exercise of power, abuses his wretched creatures for the sport of his cruelty. But we, who know that all men are liable to so many charges at the Divine tribunal, that of a thousand questions they would be unable to give a satisfactory answer to one, confess that the reprobate suffer nothing but what is consistent with the most righteous judgment of God. Though we cannot comprehend the reason of this, let us be content with some degree of ignorance where the wisdom of God soars into its own sublimity.

XV. But as objections are frequently raised from some passages of Scripture, in which God seems to deny that the destruction of the wicked is caused by his decree, but that, in opposition to his remonstrances, they voluntarily bring ruin upon themselves; let us shew by a brief explication that they are not at all inconsistent with the foregoing doctrine. A passage is produced from Ezekiel, where God says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." (n) If this is to be extended to all mankind, why does he not urge many to repentance, whose minds are more flexible to obedience than those of others, who grow more and more callous to his daily invitations? Among the inhabitants of Nineveh and Sodom, Christ himself declares that his evangelical preaching and miracles would have brought forth more fruit than in Judea. How is it then, if God will have all men to be saved, that he opens not the gate of repentance to those miserable men who would be more ready to receive the favour? Hence we perceive it to be a violent perversion of the passage, if the will of God, mentioned by the prophet, be set in opposition to his eternal counsel, by which he hath distinguished the elect from the reprobate. Now if we inquire the genuine sense of the prophet, his only meaning is to inspire the penitent with hopes of pardon. And this is the sum, that it is beyond a doubt that God is ready to pardon sinners immediately on their conversion. Therefore he wills not their death, inasmuch as he wills their repentance. But experience teaches, that he does not will the repentance of those whom he exter-

(n) Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

nally calls, in such a manner as to affect all their hearts. Nor should he on this account be charged with acting deceitfully; for, though his external call only renders those who hear without obeying it inexcusable, yet it is justly esteemed the testimony of God's grace, by which he reconciles men to himself. Let us observe, therefore, the design of the prophet in saying that God hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner; it is to assure the faithful of God's readiness to pardon them immediately on their repentance, and to shew the impious the aggravation of their sin in rejecting such great compassion and kindness of God. Repentance, therefore, will always be met by Divine mercy; but on whom repentance is bestowed, we are clearly taught by Ezekiel himself, as well as by all the prophets and apostles.

XVI. Another passage adduced is from Paul, where he states that "God will have all men to be saved;" (*o*) which, though somewhat different from the passage just considered, yet is very similar to it. I reply, in the first place, that it is evident from the context, how God wills the salvation of all; for Paul connects these two things together, that he "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." If it was fixed in the eternal counsel of God, that they should receive the doctrine of salvation, what is the meaning of that question of Moses; "What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them as we have?" (*p*) How is it that God hath deprived many nations of the light of the gospel, which others enjoyed? How is it that the pure knowledge of the doctrine of piety has never reached some, and that others have but just heard some obscure rudiments of it? Hence it will be easy to discover the design of Paul. He had enjoined Timothy to make solemn prayers in the Church for kings and princes; but as it might seem somewhat inconsistent to pray to God for a class of men altogether past hope, for they were not only strangers to the body of Christ, but striving with all their power to ruin his kingdom; he subjoins, that "this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, who will have all men to be saved:" which only imports, that God has not closed the way

(*o*) 1 Tim. ii. 4.

(*p*) Deut. iv. 7.

of salvation against any order of men, but has diffused his mercy in such a manner that he would have no rank to be destitute of it. The other texts adduced are not declarative of the Lord's determination respecting all men in his secret counsel; they only proclaim that pardon is ready for all sinners who sincerely seek it. (*q*) For if they obstinately insist on its being said that God is merciful to all, I will oppose to them, what is elsewhere asserted, that "our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." (*r*) This text then must be explained in a manner consistent with another, where God says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." (*s*) He who makes a selection of objects for the exercise of his mercy, does not impart that mercy to all. But as it clearly appears that Paul is there speaking, not of individuals, but orders of men, I shall forbear any further argument. It must be remarked, however, that Paul is not declaring the actual conduct of God at all times, in all places, and to all persons, but merely representing him as at liberty to make kings and magistrates at length partakers of the heavenly doctrine, notwithstanding their present rage against it in consequence of their blindness. There is more apparent plausibility in their objection, from the declaration of Peter, that "the Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (*t*) But the second clause furnishes an immediate solution of this difficulty; for the willingness that they should come to repentance must be understood in consistence with the general tenour of Scripture. Conversion is certainly in the power of God; let him be asked, whether he wills the conversion of all, when he promises a few individuals to give them "a heart of flesh," while he leaves others with "a heart of stone." (*u*) If he were not ready to receive those who implore his mercy, there would indeed be no propriety in this address; "Turn ye unto me, and I will turn unto you;" (*x*) but I maintain that no mortal ever approaches God without being divinely drawn. But if repentance depended on the will of man, Paul would not have said; "If God peradventure will give them repentance." (*y*) And if God, whose

(*q*) Psalm cxlv. 9. (*r*) Psalm cxv. 3. (*s*) Exod. xxxiii. 19. (*t*) 2 Peter iii. 9.
 (*u*) Ezek. xxxvi. 26. (*x*) Zech. i. 3. (*y*) 2 Tim. ii. 25.

voice exhorts all men to repentance, did not draw the elect to it by the secret operation of his Spirit, Jeremiah would not have said; "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented." (2)

XVII. If this be correct, it will be said there can be but little faith in the promises of the gospel, which, in declaring the will of God, assert that he wills what is repugnant to his inviolable decree. But this is far from a just conclusion. For if we turn our attention to the effect of the promises of salvation, we shall find that their universality is not at all inconsistent with the predestination of the reprobate. We know the promises to be effectual to us only when we receive them by faith: on the contrary, the annihilation of faith is at once an abolition of the promises. If this is their nature, we may perceive that there is no discordance between these two things; God's having appointed from eternity on whom he will bestow his favour and exercise his wrath, and his proclaiming salvation indiscriminately to all. Indeed, I maintain that there is the most perfect harmony between them. For his sole design in thus promising, is to offer his mercy to all who desire and seek it, which none do but those whom he has enlightened, and he enlightens all whom he has predestinated to salvation. These persons experience the certain and unshaken truth of the promises; so that it cannot be pretended that there is the least contrariety between God's eternal election and the testimony of his grace offered to the faithful. But why does he mention all? It is in order that the consciences of the faithful may enjoy the more secure satisfaction, seeing that there is no difference between sinners, provided they have faith; and, on the other hand, that the impious may not plead the want of an asylum to flee to from the bondage of sin, while they ungratefully reject that which is offered to them. When the mercy of God is offered to both by the gospel, it is faith, that is, the illumination of God, which distinguishes between the pious and impious; so that the former experience the efficacy of the gospel, but the latter derive no benefit from it. Now this illumination is regulated by

God's eternal election. The complaint and lamentation of Christ, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, and ye would not;" (a) however they cite it, affords them no support. I confess, that Christ here speaks not merely in his human character, but that he is upbraiding the Jews for having in all ages rejected his grace. But we must define the will of God which is here intended. It is well known how sedulously God laboured to preserve that people to himself, and with what extreme obstinacy, from the first to the last, they refused to be gathered, being abandoned to their own wandering desires; but this does not authorise the conclusion, that the counsel of God was frustrated by the wickedness of men. They object, that nothing is more inconsistent with the nature of God than to have two wills. This I grant them, provided it be rightly explained. But why do they not consider the numerous passages, where, by the assumption of human affections, God condescends beneath his own majesty? He says, "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people;" (b) early and late endeavouring to bring them to himself. If they are determined to accommodate all this to God, and disregard the figurative mode of expression, they will give rise to many needless contentions, which may be settled by this one solution, that what is peculiar to man is transferred to God. The solution, however, elsewhere stated by us, is fully sufficient; that though to our apprehension the will of God is manifold and various, yet he does not in himself will things at variance with each other, but astonishes our faculties with his various and "manifold wisdom," according to the expression of Paul, till we shall be enabled to understand, that he mysteriously wills what now seems contrary to his will. They impertinently object, that God being the Father of all, it is unjust for him to disinherit any but such as have previously deserved this punishment by their own guilt. As if the goodness of God did not extend even to dogs and swine. But if the question relates to the human race, let them answer why God allied himself to one people as their Father; why he gathered even from them but a very small number, as the flower of them.

(a) Matt. xxiii. 37.

(b) Isaiah lxx. 2.

But their rage for slander prevents these railers from considering that God "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good," (c) but that the inheritance is reserved for the few, to whom it shall one day be said, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (d) They further object, that God hates nothing he has made; which though I grant them, the doctrine I maintain still remains unshaken, that the reprobate are hated by God, and that most justly, because, being destitute of his Spirit, they can do nothing but what is deserving of his curse. They further allege, that there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile, and therefore that the grace of God is offered indiscriminately to all: I grant it; only let them admit, according to the declaration of Paul, that God calls whom he pleases, both of the Jews and of the Gentiles, (e) so that he is under no obligation to any. In this way also we answer their arguments from another text, which says, that "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all;" (f) which imports that he will have the salvation of all who are saved, ascribed to his mercy, though this blessing is not common to all. Now while many arguments are advanced on both sides, let our conclusion be to stand astonished with Paul at so great a mystery, and amidst the clamour of petulant tongues let us not be ashamed of exclaiming with him, "O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" For, as Augustine justly contends, it is acting a more perverse part, to set up the measure of human justice as the standard by which to measure the justice of God.

(c) Matt. v. 43. (d) Matt. xxv. 34. (e) Rom. ix. 24. (f) Rom. xi. 32.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Final Resurrection.

THOUGH Christ, the Sun of righteousness, after having "abolished death," is declared by Paul to have "brought life and immortality to light," shining upon us "through the gospel," (*g*) whence also in believing we are said to have "passed from death unto life," (*h*) being "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God," (*i*) who "hath made us sit together in heavenly places" with his only-begotten Son, (*k*) that nothing may be wanting to our complete felicity; yet, lest we should find it grievous to be still exercised with a severe warfare, as though we derived no benefit from the victory gained by Christ, we must remember what is stated in another place concerning the nature of hope. For "since we hope for that we see not," (*l*) and, according to another text, "faith is the evidence of things not seen;" (*m*) as long as we are confined in the prison of the flesh "we are absent from the Lord." (*n*) Wherefore the same apostle says, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God;" and "when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (*o*) This then is our condition, "that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (*p*) Here we have need of more than common patience, lest being wearied we pursue a retrograde course, or desert the station assigned us. All that has hitherto been stated, therefore, concerning our salvation, requires minds elevated towards heaven; that, according to the suggestion of Peter, we may love Christ whom we have not seen, and, believing in him, may "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," till we receive "the end of our faith." (*q*) For which reason, Paul represents the faith and hope of the faithful as having respect to

(*g*) 2 Tim. i. 10. (*h*) John v. 24. (*i*) Ephes. ii. 19. (*k*) Ephes. ii. 6.
 (*l*) Rom. viii. 24. (*m*) Heb. xi. 1. (*n*) 2 Cor. v. 6. (*o*) Col. iii. 3, 4.
 (*p*) Titus ii. 12, 13. (*q*) 1 Peter i. 8, 9.

“the hope that is laid up in heaven.” (*r*) When we are thus looking towards heaven, with our eyes fixed upon Christ, and nothing detains them on earth from carrying us forward to the promised blessedness, we realize the fulfilment of that declaration, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (*s*) Hence it is, that faith is so scarce in the world; because to our sluggishness nothing is more difficult than to ascend through innumerable obstacles, “pressing toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling.” (*t*) To the accumulation of miseries which generally oppress us, are added the mockeries of the profane, with which our simplicity is assailed; while voluntarily renouncing the allurements of present advantage or pleasure, we seem to pursue happiness, which is concealed from our view, like a shadow that continually eludes our grasp. In a word, above and below, before and behind, we are beset by violent temptations, which our minds would long ago have been incapable of sustaining, if they had not been detached from terrestrial things, and attached to the heavenly life which is apparently at a remote distance. He alone, therefore, has made a solid proficiency in the gospel, who has been accustomed to continual meditation on the blessed resurrection.

II. The supreme good was a subject of anxious dispute, and even contention, among the ancient philosophers: yet none of them, except Plato, acknowledged the chief good of man to consist in his union with God. But of the nature of this union he had not even the smallest idea; and no wonder, for he was totally uninformed respecting the sacred bond of it. We know what is the only and perfect happiness even in this earthly pilgrimage; but it daily inflames our hearts with increasing desires after it, till we shall be satisfied with its full fruition. Therefore I have observed that the advantage of Christ’s benefits is solely enjoyed by those who elevate their minds to the resurrection. Thus Paul also sets before the faithful this object, towards which he tells us he directs all his own efforts, forgetting every thing else, “if by any means he may attain unto it.” (*u*) And it behoves us to press forward to the same point with the greater alacrity; lest, if this world engross our attention, we

(*r*) Col. i. 5. (*s*) Matt. vi. 21. (*t*) Phil. iii. 14. (*u*) Phil. iii. 8—11.

should be grievously punished for our sloth. He therefore characterizes the faithful by this mark, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour." (x) And that their minds may not flag in this course, he associates with them all creatures as their companions. For as ruin and deformity are visible on every side, he tells us that all things in heaven and earth are tending to renovation. For the fall of Adam having deranged the perfect order of nature, the bondage to which the creatures have been subjected by the sin of man is grievous and burdensome to them; not that they are endued with any intelligence, but because they naturally aspire to the state of perfection from which they have fallen. Paul therefore attributes to them groaning and travailing pains, (y) that we who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit may be ashamed of remaining in our corruption, and not imitating at least the inanimate elements which bear the punishment of the sin of others. But as a still stronger stimulus to us, he calls the second advent of Christ "our redemption." It is true, indeed, that all the parts of our redemption are already completed; but because "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, he shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (z) Whatever calamities oppress us, this redemption should support us even till its full consummation.

III. Let the importance of the object sharpen our pursuit. Paul justly argues, that "if there be no resurrection of the dead," the whole gospel is vain and fallacious; for we should be "of all men the most miserable," being exposed to the hatred and reproaches of mankind, "standing in jeopardy every hour," (a) and being even like sheep destined to the slaughter; and therefore its authority would fall to the ground, not in one point only, but in every thing it contains relating to adoption and the accomplishment of our salvation. To this subject, the most important of all, let us give an attention never to be wearied by length of time. With this view I have deferred what I shall briefly say of it to this place, that the reader, after receiving Christ as the Author of complete salvation, may learn to soar higher, and may know that he is invested with

(x) Phil. iii. 20. (y) Rom. viii. 19—23. (z) Heb. ix. 28. (a) 1 Cor. xv. 13. &c.

heavenly glory and immortality, in order that the whole body may be conformed to the Head: as in his person the Holy Spirit frequently gives an example of the resurrection. It is a thing difficult to be believed, that bodies, after having been consumed by corruption, shall at length, at the appointed time, be raised again. Therefore, while many of the philosophers asserted the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body was admitted by very few. And though this furnishes no excuse, yet it admonishes us that this truth is too difficult to command the assent of the human mind. To enable faith to surmount so great an obstacle, the Scripture supplies us with two assistances; one consists in the similitude of Christ, the other in the omnipotence of God. Now whenever the resurrection is mentioned, let us set before us the image of Christ, who in our nature, which he assumed, finished his course in this mortal life in such a manner, that, having now obtained immortality, he is the pledge of future resurrection to us. For in the afflictions that befall us, "we bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." (b) And to separate him from us, is not lawful, nor indeed possible, without rending him asunder. Hence the reasoning of Paul; "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:" (c) for he assumes this as an acknowledged principle, that Christ neither fell under the power of death, nor triumphed over it in his resurrection, for himself as a private individual; but that all this was a commencement in the Head of what must be fulfilled in all the members, according to every one's order and degree. For it would not be right, indeed, for them to be in all respects equal to him. It is said in the Psalms; "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." (d) Though a portion of this confidence belongs to us, according to the measure bestowed upon us; yet the perfect accomplishment has been seen in Christ alone, who had his body restored to him entire, free from all corruption. Now that we may have no doubt of our fellowship with Christ in his blessed resurrection, and may be satisfied with this pledge, Paul expressly affirms that the design of his session in

(b) 2 Cor. iv. 10.

(c) 1 Cor. xv. 13.

(d) Psalm xvi. 10.

heaven, and his advent in the character of Judge at the last day, is to "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." (*e*) In another place also, he shews that God raised his Son from the dead, not in order to display a single specimen of his power, but to exert on the faithful the same energy of his Spirit, whom he therefore calls "our life" while he dwells in us, because he was given for this very purpose, "to quicken our mortal bodies." (*f*) I am but briefly glancing at things which would admit of a fuller discussion, and are deserving of more elegance of style; but I trust the pious reader will find in a small compass sufficient matter for the edification of his faith. Christ, therefore, rose again, that we might be the companions of his future life. He was raised by the power of the Spirit, who is given to us also for the purpose of quickening us. In a word, he was raised that he might be "the resurrection and the life." But as we have observed that this mirror exhibits to us a lively image of our resurrection, so it will furnish a firm foundation for our minds to rest upon, provided we are not wearied or disturbed by the long delay: because it is not ours to measure the moments of time by our own inclination, but to wait patiently for God's establishment of his kingdom in his own appointed time. To this purpose is the expression of Paul; "Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's, at his coming." (*g*) But that no doubt might be entertained of the resurrection of Christ, on which the resurrection of us all is founded, we see in how many and various ways he has caused it to be attested to us. Scorners will ridicule the history narrated by the evangelists, as a childish mockery. For what weight, they ask, is there in the message brought by some women in a fright, and afterwards confirmed by the disciples half dead with fear? Why does not Christ rather set up the splendid trophies of his victory in the midst of the temple and the public places? Why does he not make a formidable entrance into the presence of Pilate? Why does he not prove himself to be again alive, to the priests and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem? Profane men will scarcely believe the persons selected by him to be compe-

(*e*) Phil. iii. 21.(*f*) Col. iii. 4. Rom. viii. 11.(*g*) 1 Cor. xv. 23.

tent witnesses. I reply, notwithstanding the contemptible weakness evident in these beginnings, yet all this was conducted by the admirable providence of God, that they who were lately dispirited with fear, were hurried away to the sepulchre, partly by love to Christ and pious zeal, partly by their own unbelief, not only to be eye-witnesses of the fact, but to hear from the angels the same as they saw with their eyes. How can we suspect the authority of those who considered what they heard from the women “as idle tales,” till they had the fact clearly before them? (*h*) As to the people at large, and the governor himself, it is no wonder that after the ample conviction they had, they were denied a sight of Christ, or any other proofs. The sepulchre is sealed, a watch is set, the body is not found on the third day. The soldiers, corrupted by bribes, circulate a rumour that he was stolen away by his disciples: (*i*) as if they had power to collect a strong force, or were furnished with arms, or were even accustomed to such a daring exploit. But if the soldiers had not courage enough to repulse them, why did they not pursue them, that with the assistance of the people they might seize some of them? The truth is, therefore, that Pilate by his zeal attested the resurrection of Christ; and the guards who were placed at the sepulchre, either by their silence or by their falsehood, were in reality so many heralds to publish the same fact. In the mean time, the voice of the angels loudly proclaimed, “He is not here, but is risen.” (*k*) Their celestial splendour evidently shewed them to be angels and not men. After this, if there was any doubt still remaining, it was removed by Christ himself. More than once, his disciples saw, and even felt and handled him: and their unbelief has eminently contributed to the confirmation of our faith. He discoursed among them concerning the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and at length they saw him ascend to heaven. (*l*) Nor was this spectacle exhibited only to the chosen apostles, but “he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.” (*m*) By the mission of the Holy Spirit he gave an undeniable proof, not only of his life, but also of his sovereign dominion: accord-

(*h*) Luke xxiv. 11.

(*i*) Matt. xxvii. 66. xxviii. 11, &c.

(*k*) Luke xxiv. 4—6. Matt. xxviii. 3—6. (*l*) Acts i. 3, 9.

(*m*) 1 Cor. xv. 6.

ing to his prediction, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (*n*) Paul in his way to Damascus was not prostrated to the ground by the influence of a dead man, but felt that the person whom he was opposing was armed with supreme power. He appeared to Stephen for another reason; to overcome the fear of death by an assurance of life. (*o*) To refuse credit to testimonies so numerous and authentic, is not diffidence, but perverse and unreasonable obstinacy.

IV. The remark we have made, that in proving the resurrection, our minds should be directed to the infinite power of God, is briefly suggested in these words of Paul; "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (*p*) It would therefore be extremely unreasonable here, to consider what could possibly happen in the ordinary course of nature, when the object proposed to us is an inestimable miracle, the magnitude of which absorbs all our faculties. Yet Paul adduces an example from nature to reprove the folly of those who deny the resurrection. "Thou fool," says he, "that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." (*q*) He tells us that seed sown displays an image of the resurrection, because the corn is reproduced from putrefaction. Nor would it be a thing so difficult to believe, if we paid proper attention to the miracles which present themselves to our view in all parts of the world. But let us remember, that no man will be truly persuaded of the future resurrection, but he who is filled with admiration, and ascribes to the power of God the glory that is due to it. Transported with this confidence, Isaiah exclaims; "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise: awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust." (*r*) Surrounded by desperate circumstances, he has recourse to God, the Author of life, unto whom, as the Psalmist says, "belong the issues from death." (*s*) Even reduced to a state resembling a dead carcase more than a living man, yet relying on the power of God, just as if he were in perfect health, Job looks forward without any

(*n*) John xvi. 7. (*o*) Acts vii. 55. (*p*) Phil. iii. 21. (*q*) 1 Cor. xv. 36.

(*r*) Isaiah xxvi. 19. (*s*) Psalm lxxviii. 20.

doubts to that day: "I know," says he, "that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth," there to display his power; "and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself and not another." (*t*) For though some persons employ great subtilty to pervert these texts, as if they ought not to be understood of the resurrection, they nevertheless confirm what they wish to destroy; since holy men, in the midst of calamities, seek consolation from no other quarter than from the similitude of the resurrection: which more fully appears from a passage in Ezekiel. (*u*) For when the Jews rejected the promise of their restoration, and objected, that there was no more probability of a way being opened for their return, than of the dead coming forth from their sepulchres, a vision is presented to the prophet, of a field full of dry bones, and God commands them to receive flesh and nerves. Though this figure is intended to inspire the people with a hope of restoration, he borrows the argument for it from the resurrection; as it is to us also the principal model of all the deliverances which the faithful experience in this world. So Christ, after having declared that the voice of the gospel communicates life, in consequence of its rejection by the Jews immediately adds; "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth," (*x*) After the example of Paul, therefore, let us even now triumphantly exult in the midst of our conflicts, that he who has promised us a life to come "is able to keep that which we have committed to him;" and thus let us glory that "there is laid up for us a crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge shall give us." (*y*) The consequence of this will be, that all the troubles we suffer will point us to the life to come, "seeing it is a righteous thing with God," and agreeable to his nature, "to recompense tribulation to them that trouble us, and to us who are" unjustly "troubled, rest, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed with his mighty angels, in flaming fire." (*z*) But we must remember what immediately

(*t*) Job xix. 25, 27.(*u*) Ezek. xxxvii. 1—14.(*x*) John v. 28, 29.(*y*) 2 Tim. i. 12. iv. 8.(*z*) 2 Thess. i. 6—8, 10.

follows, that "he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe," because they believe the gospel.

V. Now though the minds of men ought to be continually occupied with the study of this subject, yet, as if they expressly intended to abolish all remembrance of the resurrection, they have called death the end of all things, and the destruction of man. For Solomon certainly speaks according to a common and received opinion, when he says, "A living dog is better than a dead lion." (a) And again, "Who knows whether the spirit of man goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast goeth downward?" (b) This brutish stupidity has infected all ages of the world, and even forced its way into the Church; for the Sadducees had the audacity publicly to profess, that there is no resurrection, and that souls are mortal. But that none might be excused by this gross ignorance, the very instinct of nature has always set before the eyes of unbelievers an image of the resurrection. For what is the sacred and inviolable custom of interring the dead, but a pledge of another life? Nor can it be objected that this originated in error; for the rites of sepulture were always observed among the holy fathers; and it pleased God that the same custom should be retained among the Gentiles, that their torpor might be roused by the image of the resurrection thereby set before them. Though this ceremony produced no good effects upon them, yet it will be useful to us, if we wisely consider its tendency: for it is no slight refutation of unbelief, that all united in professing a thing that none of them believed. But Satan has not only stupefied men's minds, to make them bury the memory of the resurrection together with the bodies of the dead, but has endeavoured to corrupt this point of doctrine by various fictions, with an ultimate view to its total subversion. Not to mention that he began to oppose it in the days of Paul, not long after arose the Millenarians, who limited the reign of Christ to a thousand years. Their fiction is too puerile to require or deserve refutation. Nor does the Revelation, which they quote in favour of their error, afford them any support: for the term of a thousand years there

(a) Eccl. ix. 4.

(b) Eccl. iii. 21.

mentioned, (c) refers not to the eternal blessedness of the Church, but to the various agitations which awaited the Church in its militant state upon earth. But the whole Scripture proclaims that there will be no end of the happiness of the elect, or the punishment of the reprobate. Now all those things which are invisible to our eyes, or far above the comprehension of our minds, must either be believed on the authority of the oracles of God, or entirely rejected. Those who assign the children of God a thousand years to enjoy the inheritance of the future life, little think what dishonour they cast on Christ and his kingdom. For if they are not invested with immortality, neither is Christ himself, into the likeness of whose glory they will be transformed, received up into immortal glory. If their happiness will have any end, it follows that the kingdom of Christ, on the stability of which it rests, is temporary. Lastly, either these persons are extremely ignorant of all divine things, or they are striving with malignant perverseness to overturn all the grace of God and power of Christ; and these can never be perfectly fulfilled till sin is abolished, and death swallowed up, and eternal life completely established. But the folly of being afraid that too much cruelty is attributed to God, if the reprobate are doomed to eternal punishment, is even evident to the blind. Will the Lord do any injury by refusing the enjoyment of his kingdom to persons whose ingratitude shall have rendered them unworthy of it? But their sins are temporary. This I grant; but the majesty of God, as well as his justice, which their sins have violated, is eternal. Their iniquity, therefore, is justly remembered. Then the punishment is alleged to be excessive, being disproportioned to the crime. But this is intolerable blasphemy, when the majesty of God is so little valued, when the contempt of it is considered of no more consequence than the destruction of one soul. But let us pass by these triflers; lest, contrary to what we have before said, we should appear to consider their reveries as worthy of refutation.

VI. Beside these wild notions, the perverse curiosity of man has introduced two others. Some have supposed that the whole man dies, and that souls are raised again together with bodies:

others, admitting the immortality of souls, suppose they will be clothed with new bodies, and thereby deny the resurrection of the flesh. As I have touched on the former of these notions in the creation of man, it will be sufficient again to apprise my readers, that it is a brutish error, to represent the spirit, formed after the image of God, as a fleeting breath which animates the body only during this perishable life; and to annihilate the temple of the Holy Spirit: in short, to despoil that part of us in which divinity is eminently displayed, and the characters of immortality are conspicuous, of this property; so that the condition of the body must be better and more excellent than that of the soul. Very different is the doctrine of Scripture, which compares the body to a habitation from which we depart at death; because it estimates us by that part of our nature which constitutes the distinction between us and the brutes. Thus Peter, when near his death, says; "Shortly I must put off this my tabernacle." (*d*) And Paul, speaking of the faithful, having said that "if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building in the heavens," adds that "whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." (*e*) Unless our souls survive our bodies, what is it that is present with God when separated from the body? But the apostle removes all doubt when he says that we are "come to the spirits of just men made perfect." (*f*) By which expression he means, that we are associated with the holy fathers, who though dead still maintain the same piety with us, so that we cannot be members of Christ without being united with them. If souls separated from bodies did not retain their existence so as to be capable of glory and felicity, Christ would not have said to the thief; "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." (*g*) Supported by such undeniable testimonies, let us not hesitate, after the example of Christ, when we die, to commend our spirits to God; or, like Stephen, to resign them to the care of Christ, who is justly called the faithful "Shepherd and Bishop of souls." Over-curious inquiry respecting their intermediate state is neither lawful nor useful. Many persons exceedingly

(*d*) 2 Peter i. 14.(*f*) Heb. xii. 23.(*e*) 2 Cor. v. 1, 8.(*g*) Luke xxiii. 43.

perplex themselves by discussing what place they occupy, and whether they already enjoy the glory of heaven, or not. But it is folly and presumption to push our inquiries on unknown things beyond what God permits us to know. The Scripture declares that Christ is present with them, and receives them into paradise, where they enjoy consolation, and that the souls of the reprobate endure the torments which they have deserved; but it proceeds no farther. Now what teacher or doctor shall discover to us that which God has concealed? The question respecting place is equally senseless and futile; because we know that the soul has no dimensions like the body. The blessed assemblage of holy spirits being called the bosom of Abraham, teaches us that it is enough for us at the close of this pilgrimage to be received by the common father of the faithful, and to participate with him in the fruit of his faith. In the mean while, as the Scripture uniformly commands us to look forward with eager expectation to the coming of Christ, and defers the crown of glory which awaits us till that period, let us be content within these limits which God prescribes to us—that the souls of pious men, after finishing their laborious warfare, depart into a state of blessed rest, where they wait with joy and pleasure for the fruition of the promised glory; and so, that all things remain in suspense till Christ appears as the Redeemer. And there is no doubt that the condition of the reprobate is the same as Jude assigns to the devils, who are confined and bound in chains till they are brought forth to the punishment to which they are doomed.

VII. Equally monstrous is the error of those who imagine that souls will not resume the bodies which at present belong to them, but will be furnished with others altogether different. It was the very futile reasoning of the Manichæans, that it is absurd to expect that the flesh which is so impure will ever rise again. As if there were no impurity attached to the souls, which they nevertheless encouraged to entertain hopes of a heavenly life. It was therefore just as if they had maintained, that any thing infected with the contagion of sin is incapable of being purified by the power of God; for that reverie, that the flesh was created by the devil, and therefore naturally impure, I at present forbear to notice; and only observe, that whatever

we have in us now unworthy of heaven, will not hinder the resurrection. In the first place, when Paul exhorts believers to "cleanse" themselves "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," (*h*) thence follows the judgment he elsewhere denounces, "that every one" shall "receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;" (*i*) with which agrees another passage; "that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." (*k*) Wherefore, in another place, he prays to God that the whole person may "be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," even the "body" as well as the "soul and spirit." (*l*) And no wonder, for that those bodies which God has dedicated as temples for himself should sink into corruption without any hope of resurrection, would be absurd in the extreme. What is to be concluded from their being members of Christ? (*m*) from God's enjoining every part of them to be sanctified to himself, requiring their tongues to celebrate his name, their hands to be lifted up with purity to him, (*n*) and their bodies altogether to be presented to him as "living sacrifices?" (*o*) This part of our nature therefore being dignified with such illustrious honour by the heavenly Judge, what madness is betrayed by a mortal man, in asserting it to be reduced to ashes without any hope of restoration! And Paul, when he gives us this exhortation, "Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's," (*p*) certainly does not countenance consigning to eternal corruption that which he asserts to be consecrated to God. Nor is there any point more clearly established in Scripture, than the resurrection of our present bodies. "This corruptible," says Paul, "must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." (*q*) If new bodies were to be formed by God, what would become of this change of quality? If it had been said, that we must be renewed, the ambiguity of the expression might have given occasion for cavil: now when he particularly designates the bodies that surround us, and promises that they shall be "raised in incorruption," it is a sufficient denial of the formation of new ones. "He could not indeed," says Tertullian,

(*h*) 2 Cor. vii. 1.(*l*) 1 Thess. v. 23.(*o*) Rom. xii. 1.(*i*) 2 Cor. v. 10.(*m*) 1 Cor. vi. 15.(*p*) 1 Cor. vi. 20.(*k*) 2 Cor. iv. 10.(*n*) 1 Tim. ii. 8.(*q*) 1 Cor. xv. 54.

“have spoken more expressly, if he had held his own skin in his hand.” Nor will any cavil evade the declaration of Isaiah, cited by the apostle, respecting Christ as the future Judge of the world; “As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me:” (*r*) for he plainly declares to the persons addressed by him, that they shall be obliged to give an account of their lives; which would not be reasonable, if new bodies were to be placed at the tribunal. There is no obscurity in the language of Daniel; “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” (*s*) For God does not collect fresh materials from the four elements for the fabrication of men, but calls the dead out of their sepulchres. And this the plainest reason dictates. For if death, which originated in the fall of man, be adventitious, and not necessary to our nature; the restoration effected by Christ belongs to the same body which was thus rendered mortal. From the ridicule of the Athenians, when Paul asserted the resurrection, it is easy to infer the nature of his doctrine: and that ridicule is of no small weight for the confirmation of our faith. The injunction of Christ also is worthy of attention; “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (*t*) For there would be no reason for this fear, if the body which we now carry about were not liable to punishment. Another of Christ’s declarations is equally plain: “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (*u*) Shall we say that souls rest in graves, and will there hear the voice of Christ, and not rather that bodies at his command will return to the vigour they had lost? Besides, if we are to receive new bodies, where will be the conformity between the Head and members? Christ rose; was it by making himself a new body? No, but according to his prediction, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” (*x*) The mortal body which he before possessed, he again assumed. For it would have conduced but little to our benefit, if there

(*r*) Rom. xiv. 11, 12.(*s*) Dan. xii. 2.(*t*) Matt. x. 28.(*u*) John v. 28, 29.(*x*) John ii. 19.

had been a substitution of a new body, and an annihilation of that which had been offered as an atoning sacrifice. We must, therefore, maintain the connection stated by the apostle; that, we shall rise, because Christ has risen; (*y*) for nothing is more improbable, than that our body, in which “we bear about the dying of the Lord Jesus,” (*z*) should be deprived of a resurrection similar to his. There was an illustrious example of this immediately on Christ’s resurrection, when “the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose.” (*a*) For it cannot be denied, that this was a prelude, or rather an earnest, of the final resurrection, which we expect; such as was exhibited before in Enoch and Elias, whom Tertullian speaks of as enjoying the benefits of resurrection, because they were taken into the immediate care of God, with an entire exemption from corruption in body and soul.

VIII. I am ashamed of consuming so many words on so clear a subject, but my readers will cheerfully unite with me in submitting to this trouble, that no room may be left for men of perverse and presumptuous minds to deceive the unwary. The unsteady spirits I am now opposing, bring forward a figment of their own brains, that at the resurrection there will be a creation of new bodies. What reason can induce them to adopt this sentiment, but a seeming incredibility, in their apprehension, that a body long consumed by corruption can ever return to its pristine state? Unbelief, therefore, is the only source of this opinion? In the Scripture, on the contrary, we are uniformly exhorted by the Spirit of God, to hope for the resurrection of our body. For this reason, baptism is spoken of by Paul as a seal of our future resurrection; (*b*) and we are as clearly invited to this confidence by the sacred Supper, when we receive into our mouths the symbols of spiritual grace. And certainly the exhortation of Paul, to “yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto God,” (*c*) would lose all its force, if unaccompanied by what he afterwards subjoins; “He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies.” (*d*) For what would it avail, to devote our feet, hands, eyes, and tongues to the service of God, if they were not to

(*y*) 1 Cor. xv. 12, &c.(*z*) 2 Cor. iv. 10.(*a*) Matt. xxvi. 52.(*b*) Col. ii. 12.(*c*) Rom. vi. 13.(*d*) Rom. viii. 11.

participate the benefit and reward? This is clearly confirmed by the following passage of Paul; "The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power." (*e*) The following passages are still plainer; that our bodies are the "temples of the Holy Ghost," and "members of Christ." (*f*) In the mean time, we see how he connects the resurrection with chastity and holiness—and so he just after extends the price of redemption to our bodies. Now it would be extremely unreasonable, that the body of Paul, in which he "bore the marks of the Lord Jesus," (*g*) and in which he eminently glorified Christ, should be deprived of the reward of the crown. Hence also that exultation; "We look for the Saviour from heaven, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." (*h*) And if it be true, "that we must through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God," (*i*) there can be no reason for prohibiting this entrance to the bodies, which God trains under the banner of the cross, and honours with the glory of victory. Therefore no doubt has ever been entertained by the saints, whether they should hope to be companions of Christ hereafter; who transfers to his own person all the afflictions with which we are tried, to teach us that he is conducting us to life. And God also established the holy Fathers under the law in this faith by an external ceremony. For to what purpose was the rite of sepulture, as we have already seen, but to instruct them that another life was prepared for the interred bodies? The same was suggested by the spices and other symbols of immortality, which, like the sacrifices under the law, assisted the obscurity of direct instruction. Nor did this custom arise from superstition; for we find the Holy Spirit as diligent in mentioning the sepultures, as in insisting on the principal mysteries of faith. And Christ commends this as no mean office; (*k*) certainly for no other reason, but because it raises our eyes from the view of the grave, which corrupts and dissolves all things, to the spectacle of future renovation. Besides, the very careful observance of this ceremony, which is commended in the Fa-

(*e*) 1 Cor. vi. 13, 14.(*f*) 1 Cor. vi. 13, 19, 20.(*g*) Gal. vi. 17.(*h*) Phil. iii. 20, 21.(*i*) Acts xiv. 22.(*k*) Matt. xxvi. 10, 12.

thers, sufficiently proves it to have been an excellent and valuable assistance to faith. Nor would Abraham have discovered such solicitous concern about the sepulchre of his wife, if he had not been actuated by motives of religion, and the prospect of more than worldly advantage; that by adorning her dead body with the emblems of the resurrection, he might confirm his own faith, and that of his family. (l) There is yet a clearer proof of this in the example of Jacob; who, to testify to his posterity that the hope of the promised land did not forsake his heart even in death, commands his bones to be reconveyed thither. (m) If he was to be furnished with a new body, would not this have been a ridiculous command concerning dust that was soon to be annihilated? Wherefore, if the authority of the Scripture has any weight with us, no clearer or stronger proof of any doctrine can possibly be desired. Even children understand this to be the meaning of the term “resurrection;” for we never apply this term to any instance of original creation; nor would it be consistent with that declaration of Christ; “Of all which the Father hath given me, I shall lose nothing, but will raise it up again at the last day. (n) The same is implied in the word “sleeping,” which is only applicable to the body. Hence the appellation of *cemetery*, or *dormitory*, given to places of burial. It remains for me to touch a little on the manner of the resurrection. And I shall but just hint at it; because Paul, by calling it a mystery, exhorts us to sobriety, and forbids all licentiousness of subtle and extravagant speculation. In the first place, let it be remembered, as we have observed, that we shall rise again with the same bodies we have now, as to the substance, but that the quality will be different; just as the very body of Christ which had been offered as a sacrifice was raised again, but with such new and superior qualities, as though it had been altogether different. Paul represents this by some familiar examples. For as the flesh of man and of brutes is the same in substance, but not in quality; as the matter of all the stars is the same, but they differ in glory; so though we shall retain the substance of our body, he tells us there will be a change, which will render its condition far more excellent. (o)

(l) Gen. xxiii. 3—19.

(n) John vi. 39, 40.

(m) Gen. xlvii. 30.

(o) 1 Cor. xv. 39—41.

The "corruptible" body, therefore, will neither perish nor vanish, in order to our resurrection; but having laid aside corruption, will "put on incorruption." (*p*) God having all the elements subject to his control, will find no difficulty in commanding the earth, the water, and the fire, to restore whatever they appear to have consumed. This is declared in figurative language by Isaiah: "Behold the Lord cometh out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." (*q*) But we must remark the difference between those who shall have been already dead, and those whom that day shall find alive. "We shall not all sleep," says Paul, "but we shall all be changed:" (*r*) that is, there will be no necessity for any distance of time to intervene between death and the commencement of the next life; for "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible," and the living transformed by a sudden change into the same glory. So in another epistle he comforts the faithful who were to die, that those "which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep," but that "the dead in Christ shall rise first." (*s*) If it be objected that the apostle says, "It is appointed unto men once to die," (*t*) the answer is easy; that where the state of the nature is changed, it is a species of death, and may without impropriety be so called: and therefore there is a perfect consistence between these things, that all will be removed by death when they put off the mortal body, but that a separation of the body and soul will not be necessary, where there will be an instantaneous change.

IX. But here arises a question of greater difficulty. How can the resurrection, which is a peculiar benefit of Christ, be common to the impious and the subjects of the Divine curse? We know that in Adam all were sentenced to death: (*u*) Christ comes as "the resurrection and the life;" (*x*) but was it to bestow life promiscuously on all mankind? But what would be more improbable, than that they should attain in their obstinate

(*p*) 1 Cor. xv. 53.(*q*) Isaiah xxvi. 21.(*r*) 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.(*s*) 1 Thess. iv. 15, 16.(*t*) Heb. ix. 27.(*u*) Rom. v. 12.(*x*) John xi. 25.

blindness, what the pious worshipers of God recover by faith alone? Yet it remains certain, that one will be a resurrection to judgment, the other to life; and that Christ will come to "separate the sheep from the goats." (y) I reply, we ought not to think that so very strange, which we see exemplified in our daily experience. We know that in Adam we lost the inheritance of the whole world, and have no more right to the enjoyment of common aliments, than to the fruit of the tree of life. How is it then, that God not only "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good," (z) but that for the accommodations of the present life, his inestimable liberality is diffused in the most copious abundance? Hence we see, that things which properly belong to Christ and his members, are also extended to the impious; not to become their legitimate possession, but to render them more inexcusable. Thus impious men frequently experience God's beneficence in remarkable instances, which sometimes exceed all the blessings of the faithful, but which, nevertheless, are the means of aggravating their condemnation. If it be objected, that the resurrection is improperly compared with fleeting and terrestrial advantages; I reply again, that when men were first alienated from God, the Fountain of life, they deserved the ruin of the devil, to be altogether destroyed: yet the wonderful counsel of God devised a middle state, that without life they might live in death. It ought not to be thought more unreasonable, if the impious are raised from the dead, in order to be dragged to the tribunal of Christ, whom they now refuse to hear as their Master and Teacher. For it would be a slight punishment to be destroyed by death, if they were not brought before the Judge whose infinite and endless vengeance they have incurred, to receive the punishments due to their rebellion. But though we must maintain what we have asserted, and what is asserted by Paul in his celebrated confession before Felix, "that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust;" (a) yet the Scripture more commonly exhibits the resurrection to the children of God alone, in connection with the glory of heaven; because, strictly speaking, Christ will come, not for the destruction of the world, but for purposes

(y) Matt. xxv. 32.

(z) Matt. v. 45.

(a) Acts xxiv. 15.

of salvation. This is the reason that the Creed mentions only the life of blessedness.

X. But, as the prophecy of "death being swallowed up in victory," shall then and not till then, be fully accomplished; let us always reflect on eternal felicity as the end of the resurrection: of the excellence of which, if every thing were said that could be expressed by all the tongues of men, yet the smallest part of it would scarcely be mentioned. For though we are plainly informed, that the kingdom of God is full of light, joy, felicity, and glory; yet all that is mentioned remains far above our comprehension, and enveloped, as it were, in enigmatical obscurity, till the arrival of that day, when he shall exhibit his glory to us face to face. "Now are we the sons of God (says John), and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (b) Wherefore the prophets, because they could not describe that spiritual blessedness by any terms expressive of its sublime nature, generally represented it under corporeal images. Yet, as any intimation of that happiness must kindle in us a fervour of desire, let us chiefly dwell on this reflection. If God, as an inexhaustible fountain, contains within himself a plenitude of all blessings, nothing beyond him can ever be desired by those who aspire to the supreme good, and a perfection of happiness. This we are taught in various passages of Scripture. "Abraham," says God, "I am thy exceeding great reward." (c) With this David agrees: "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance; the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places." (d) Again, "I will behold thy face; I shall be satisfied." (e) Peter declares, that the faithful are called, "that they might be partakers of the Divine nature." (f) How will this be? Because "he shall be glorified in his saints and admired in all them that believe." (g) If the Lord will make the elect partakers of his glory, strength, and righteousness, and will even bestow himself upon them to be enjoyed, and, what is better than this, to be in some sense united to them; let us remember, that in this favour every kind of felicity is comprised. And after we have made considerable progress in this me-

(b) 1 John iii. 2.

(c) Gen. xv. 1.

(d) Psalm xvi. 5, 6.

(e) Psalm xvii. 15.

(f) 2 Peter i. 4.

(g) 2 Thess. i. 10.

dition, we may still acknowledge the conceptions of our minds to be extremely low, in comparison with the sublimity of this mystery. Sobriety, therefore, is the more necessary for us on this subject, lest, forgetful of our slender capacity, we presumptuously soar to too high an elevation, and are overwhelmed with the blaze of celestial glory. We perceive, likewise, how we are actuated by an inordinate desire of knowing more than is right; which gives rise to a variety of questions, both frivolous and pernicious. I call those frivolous, from which no advantage can possibly be derived. But those of the second class are worse, involving persons, who indulge them, in injurious speculations, and, therefore, I call them pernicious. What is taught in the Scriptures, we ought to receive without any controversy; that as God, in the various distribution of his gifts to the saints in this world, does not equally enlighten them all; so in heaven, where God will crown those gifts, there will be an inequality in the degrees of their glory. The language of Paul is not indiscriminately applicable to all; “Ye are our glory and joy at our Lord’s coming;” (*h*) nor Christ’s address to his apostles; “Ye shall sit judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (*i*) But Paul, who knew that, according as God enriches the saints with spiritual gifts on earth, so he adorns them with glory in heaven, doubts not that there is in reserve for him a peculiar crown in proportion to his labours. And Christ commends to his apostles the dignity of the office with which they were invested, by assuring them that the reward of it was laid up in heaven. (*k*) Thus also Daniel; “They that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever.” (*l*) And an attentive consideration of the Scriptures will convince us, that they not only promise eternal life generally to the faithful, but also a special reward to each individual. Whence that expression of Paul; “The Lord reward him according to his works.” (*m*) It is also confirmed, by the promise of Christ, that his disciples should receive a hundredfold more in eternal life. (*n*) In a word, as Christ begins the glory of his body by a

(*h*) 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.(*i*) Matt. xix. 28.(*k*) Matt. v. 12.(*l*) Dan. xii. 3.(*m*) 2 Tim. iv. 14.(*n*) Matt. xix. 29.

manifold variety of gifts in this world, and enlarges it by degrees, in the same manner he will also perfect it in heaven.

XI. As all the faithful will receive this with one consent, because it is sufficiently attested in the word of God, so on the other hand, dismissing abstruse questions, which they know to be obstructions to them, they will not transgress the limits prescribed to them. For myself, I not only refrain as an individual from the unnecessary investigation of useless questions; but think it my duty to be cautious, lest I encourage the vanity of others by answering them. Men thirsting after useless knowledge, inquire what will be the distance between the prophets and apostles, and between the apostles and martyrs; and how many degrees of difference there will be between those who have married and those who have lived and died in celibacy: in short, they leave not a corner of heaven unexplored. The next object of their inquiry is, what end will be answered by the restoration of the world; since the children of God will want nothing of all its vast and incomparable abundance, but will be like the angels of God, whose freedom from all animal necessities is the symbol of eternal blessedness. I reply, there will be such great pleasantness in the very prospect, and such exquisite sweetness in the mere knowledge without any use of it, that this felicity will far exceed all the accommodations afforded us in the present state. Let us suppose ourselves placed in some region the most opulent in the world, and furnished with every pleasure; who would not sometimes be prevented by disease from making use of the bounties of God? who would not often have his enjoyment of them interrupted by the consequences of intemperance? Hence it follows, that calm and serene enjoyment, pure from every vice and free from all defect, although there should be no use of a corruptible life, is the perfection of happiness. Others go further, and inquire, whether dross and all impurities in metals are not removed from that restoration, and incompatible with such a state. Though I in some measure grant this, I expect, with Paul, a reparation of all the evils caused by sin, for which he represents the creatures as groaning and travailing. They proceed further still, and inquire, what better state awaits the human race, when the blessing of posterity shall no longer be

enjoyed. The solution of this question also is easy. The splendid commendations of it in the Scriptures relate to that progressive increase, by which God is continually carrying forward the system of nature to its consummation. But as the unwary are easily caught by such temptations, and are afterwards drawn farther into the labyrinth, till at length, every one being pleased with his own opinion, there is no end to disputes; the best and shortest rule for our conduct, is to content ourselves with "seeing through a glass darkly," till we shall "see face to face." (*o*) For very few persons are concerned about the way that leads to heaven, but all are anxious to know, before the time, what passes there. Men in general are slow, and reluctant to engage in the conflict, and yet pourtray to themselves imaginary triumphs.

XII. Now, as no description can equal the severity of the Divine vengeance on the reprobate, their anguish and torment are figuratively represented to us under corporeal images; as, darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth, unextinguishable fire, a worm incessantly gnawing the heart. (*p*) For there can be no doubt but that, by such modes of expression, the Holy Spirit intended to confound all our faculties with horror: as when it is said, that "Tophet is ordained of old; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." (*q*) As these representations should assist us in forming some conception of the wretched condition of the wicked; so they ought principally to fix our attention on the calamity of being alienated from the presence of God; and in addition to this, experiencing such hostility from the Divine Majesty as to be unable to escape from its continual pursuit. For, in the first place, his indignation is like a most violent flame, which devours and consumes all that it touches. In the next place, all the creatures so subserve the execution of his judgment, that those to whom the Lord will thus manifest his wrath, will find the heaven, the earth, and the sea, the animals, and all that exists, inflamed as it were with dire indignation against them, and all armed for

(*o*) 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

(*p*) Matt. iii. 12. viii. 12. xxii. 13. Mark ix. 43, 44. Isaiah lxi. 24.

(*q*) Isaiah xxx. 33.

their destruction. It is no trivial threatening, therefore, denounced by the apostle, that unbelievers "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (r) And when the prophets excite terror by corporeal figures, though they advance nothing hyperbolical for our dull understandings, yet they mingle preludes of the future judgment, with the sun, the moon, and the whole fabric of the world. ¶Wherefore miserable consciences find no repose, but are harassed and agitated with a dreadful tempest, feel themselves torn asunder by an angry God; and, transfixed and penetrated by mortal stings, are terrified at the thunderbolts of God, and broken by the weight of his hand; so that to sink into any gulfs and abysses would be more tolerable than to stand for a moment in these terrors. How great and severe then is the punishment, to endure the never-ceasing effects of his wrath? | On which subject there is a memorable passage in the nineteenth Psalm; that though by his countenance he scatters all mortals; and turns them to destruction, yet he encourages his servants in proportion to their timidity in this world, to excite them, though under the burden of the cross, to press forward, till he shall be all in all.

(r) 2 Thess. i. 9.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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